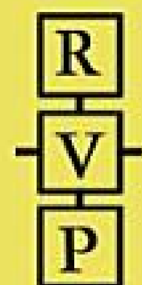
Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change
Series IIIB, South Asia, Volume 11

Lifeworlds and Ethics
Studies in several keys

Indian Philosophical Studies, XI



by *Margaret Chatterjee*

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change
Series IIIB, South Asia, Volume 11
General Editor
George F. McLean

Lifeworlds and Ethics

Studies in several keys

Indian Philosophical Studies, XI

by
Margaret Chatterjee

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

Box 261
Cardinal Station
Washington, D.C. 20064

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication

Chatterjee, Margaret, 1925-
Lifeworlds and ethics : studies in several keys, Indian philosophical studies, XI / by Margaret Chatterjee.
p. cm. -- (Cultural heritage and contemporary change. Series IIIB, South Asia ; v. 11)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Phenomenology. 2. Ethics. 3. Philosophy. I. Title. II. Series.
B829.5.C43 2006 2006001651
100--dc22 CIP

ISBN-13: 978-1-56518-233-2 (pbk.)

Cover design by Shen Changzhou

Contents

To

Elsbeth

Preface

Contemporary scholarship in the social sciences reveals fascinating commonalities and differences in lifeworlds across the globe, while philosophers strike me as, by and large, not yet drawing on this reservoir of material to the extent that they could. John Dewey's advice that philosophers should shift attention from their own technical problems to the problems of humankind is particularly pertinent in our times. I am grateful to Professor George F. McLean for his invitation to contribute to the series he is editing for The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, sensitive as the Council is to precisely the whole range of issues to be found in different cultural baskets, as also the issues which affect us all.

The subtitle I have chosen for the studies embarked on in the following chapters employs a musical metaphor. Shifts of key can startle; themes call for tracing through; and, most of all, contrapuntal connections which complicate, and even disturb, challenge understanding. Music never allows us to forget the whence and whither of the phenomenal, for the phenomenal is never merely such. My main philosophical resource has been phenomenology, as my concentration on lifeworlds suggests, even though, *qua* species of descriptive method, its application to ethics, presents special difficulty. The link between the two, my involvement with music, and preference for philosophizing phenomenologically, is the very dissonance of our times. There is an uncanny match between the aleatory in music – for which I do not particularly hold a brief – and the aporias and disjunctions of today. The ethical imperative makes itself heard like the voice of the flute which makes its way out of a forest of sounds in the orchestra. Its clarity lends a transparency to the sheer density of all the other sounds.

Margaret Chatterjee

Chapter 1

Introduction

The studies in this book seek to show how ethical questions stem from lifeworlds and confront us at every turn if we are alert to what goes on around us. For lifeworlds are above all, *inhabited*, and the familiarity this breeds, easily obscures issues we tend to overlook. The words 'embedded' and 'embodied' have very different derivations, but ethical issues are both. They resist being prized from their settings. The students who lisp with dismay in their philosophical cradles that philosophical matters are 'so abstract', may have a point if philosophical discussions remain at the level of theory. To focus ethical reflection on lifeworlds serves as a reminder of the concreteness of the situations reflected upon. At the same time we become aware of investigating a territory in which sociologists are already engaged, and which they regard as their own bailiwick. In any case, although some phenomenologists insist that there is such a thing as a universal lifeworld, the very fact that the word is more often used in the plural directs the inquirer to particularity, and as such leads in the direction taken by situationists in ethics. However, I think, we are nudged into an orientation which is salutary, simply because it is true to life. To converse in any depth with a friend is to be made aware of a standpoint, a lifeworld, other than our own, but which is not thereby alien to us.

The lifeworld revealed to a trained social worker, or to a volunteer 'Samaritan' engaged in being a listener for a possible suicide, can be saturated with the makings of tragedy, calling for a very different *metabasis eis genos* from what Aristotle had in mind. In this case the *metabasis* might involve a possible change within the circumstances of the lifeworld, or a change in *attitude* encouraged by long term counselling. The ethical aspect of the situation is two sided: on the one hand a non-directive persuasiveness aimed at enabling a change in point of view, and, on the other hand, the courage to see the apparently hopeless situation in a new light, an ethic of possibilities rather than of obligation. The ethical dimensions opened up in such situations, it seems to me, are so much more intricate, and also deeper, than a great number of the examples that usually occupy ethicists. For example, the very effort to bring the sufferer to the point of being able to see that other alternatives are possible involves a procedure quite other than argument. The modalities of 'helping' enlist an entire diapason of psychic powers.

Or let us take an illustration of a different kind. The crisis faced by a member of a community with which he[1] is in fundamental disagreement on a particular matter, experiences a disquiet in which an inherited lifeworld collides with the verdict of individual conscience. Can there be a collective conscience? The rescue operations of the villagers of Chambon during the Second World War, which saved hundreds of Jewish children from extinction, would certainly suggest that there can be such a conscience. However,

the question recalls another issue – whether there can be collective rights. In each case what is at stake concerns what we understand by individual personhood. Communities are not just *collections* of persons. Collectives range from *hagshamah*[2] to *ecclesia*, from factions to political parties – the varieties are countless. A thicket of problems faces all who would venture into pinpointing the identity of each of these.

To turn to another and no less interesting theme, a very contemporary quandary faces the whistle-blower, whether in the private or public business sector. Our whistle-blower, let us say, discovers that his employers, reputed to have a non-racist policy of recruitment, invariably 'drop' highly qualified black and Asian applicants from their shortlists. The lifeworld expressed in this corporate body on the surface, is free of prejudice. This orientation, in fact, features in the contract which new entrants sign. Moreover, the concern receives considerable funding from a religious denomination likewise vocal in its commitment to the same ideals. Our whistle-blower decides he can be silent no longer, and, in spite of conflicting loyalties to his firm and his own personal lifeworld (he has a Ugandan wife), and getting no support from his union, takes the matter up at the highest level and now runs the risk of losing his job. This example brings out the plurality of lifeworlds to which an individual can belong. The point may seem an obvious one, but which ethical theory throws light on what a conscientious employee should do? I use the word 'conscientious' advisedly, since a man who had fewer scruples would most likely decide to keep quiet. How, again, would a loyal employee reconcile the avowed overall target of profit-maximization with a moralistic 'mission statement' and the shady arms deal made by the firm which has now come to light?

Issues of this kind can be far-reaching. Given that some lifeworlds are very general in scope, as, for example, the alleged way of life to which nationals of country X or Y are *ipso facto* committed, we could well ask whether citizens, who all have their own personal lifeworlds as well, share complicity in factors such as corruption, nepotism, arms dealing, encouragement of dictators and the whole sad story of what it seems to take to keep the ship of state afloat. How much is an individual citizen *responsible for*, especially in a democracy in which each single opinion is supposed to count. The inconsistencies of public policy are legion. I would have thought that a show of military might on the occasion of a national day was hardly compatible with the official policy of peaceful relations with the country's neighbours. In any case one might wish to question whether there is such a thing as a national lifeworld and how it could be related to the individual lifeworlds of citizens, even if an oath of loyalty, or its equivalent, be a condition of being admitted as a citizen. Perhaps the typifications of a national lifeworld are more evident to a visitor than to residents. It is possible for a citizen, who otherwise takes for granted his or her national belonging, to have grave reservations about certain official policies. This would be the situation of a pacifist whose individual lifeworld collided in a marked manner with militarist escapades undertaken by his government. Moreover, even in a democracy, substantial opposition to

public policy may fail to make any dent on those who hold political power. Is such opposition merely gestural or does it have ethical weight?

Mention of the examples I have given has the limited purpose of pointing up the *kind* of ethical problems which increasingly beset thinking people in the twenty first century. The burgeoning powers of governments, to say nothing of corporate bodies and international agencies, and the way in which cultural inelasticities can present obstacles to the promotion of human welfare, throw into focus the complexity of lifeworlds, and the multiform ethical issues which appear, and are yet so often glossed over, thanks to the momentum of events. The impression is conveyed, through even a cursory acquaintance with contemporary history, that these are times in which the dignity of the person, in many parts of the world, is under threat. This comes about through a variety of factors, including the 'collateral damage' produced by militarist interventions, the poverty which dogs large sections of humanity and which is increased by the market mechanism, and the lure of authoritarian ideologies – some of them ostensibly 'religious' – which, in effect, bend the arrow of time backwards. The lifeworlds of the underprivileged undergo constant erosion, and receive scarcely any benefit from advances in science and the wealth generated on a world scale ever since the industrial revolution.

The chapters which follow contain reflections on only a few of the situations which have struck me as needing pondering. A musical metaphor is used in the subtitle, in recognition of their variety. I glean material from across the globe, finding both commonalities and diversity. Chapters 2 and 3 set the scene epistemologically for what follows, first with the analysis of intersubjectivity which is the condition of the possibility of lifeworlds, citing mainly the work of Jewish thinkers, and then turning to Husserl for his analysis of lifeworlds, both in their general structure and their plurality, this being the basis for considering the possibility of a universal lifeworld either as foundational or as a horizon. The axiological implications were worked out by some of the thinkers who adopted the phenomenological method, especially Alfred Schutz, Max Scheler, and Merleau-Ponty. Existentialists explored some of the lifeworlds of the troubled years of the thirties and forties on the Continent. I have sought to explore more recent dilemmas, considering, where it seemed fitting, material gleaned in India, and drawing on discussions participated in elsewhere, as well. The almost random catalogue of elements that enter into what Husserl calls the natural world in his *Ideas* (1913), and is expounded variously in subsequent works, invites reflection on both the intransigent nature of the inescapable, the most obvious example being death, and the surd nature of what we call circumstance.

From Aristotle to Bernard Williams, this has been recognized as a disturbing factor in the moral life. Whereas death cannot be avoided in the long run, our references to circumstance often suggest that things would have / might have, been different if only X, Y, Z, had / had not occurred. This is patently relevant to issues of responsibility, praise and blame. The nature of circumstance, to my mind, is best set out for us by novelists. In Chapter 4 I mention George Eliot, but Thomas Hardy should also be considered.

There is scarcely a major character, whether it be Jude, Tess, or the Mayor of Casterbridge, who is not caught up in a web of circumstance. What a putative Providence could have been up to, is a thought, for which, in all justice, Hardy can be pardoned. Absentee landlords incur odium, but what is to be made of an apparently absent deity? A further thought may also strike us. Whatever the epithet 'self-made' may suggest, when we hear 'He is a self-made man' admiringly said, it is surely the case that our lifeworlds are not constructed by individual effort alone. Our lives intersect with those of others, and the role of what the ancients called 'fortune', for good or ill, must also be taken into account. The heroes of antiquity, such as Hector and Lysander, struggle against odds, and it is this that constitutes their heroism. But there have to be *some* gaps in the density of circumstance. As William James stressed, only in a loose-jointed universe can freedom be possible. And yet it might be true to say that a world of *total* contingency would be meaningless, and human intentionality could have no place in it. The concept of a basic principle of order in the universe is to be found in most cultures, for it is against such a backdrop that lifeworlds of individuals and groups become possible.

Chapter 5 follows this up by turning to a different culture and considers the Indian concept of *dharma*, that which sustains, and which requires human tending, for equilibrium to be maintained. The 'clogging effect of circumstance', as I call it in Chapter 4, is illustrated most clearly in epic literature, in which, true to the Indian situation over the centuries, a great deal of the tangles in intersecting lifeworlds derive from kinship relations. *Dharma* is the principle of order which relates the cosmic, inorganic, organic, and human worlds, and even the gods. Notably, since the nineteenth century, Indian reformist thinkers have stressed that the content of *dharma* changes from age to age as lifeworlds change. Gandhi was the person most of all whose hermeneutic included radical rethinking of *dharma*, and he modified his own earlier standpoints as new insights arose in his mind. His considered stance amounted to this. The concept of 'ought' was *sanatana* or timeless, in that humans were aware of a difference between what was, on occasion, the case, and what *should be* such. But the *content* of dharma required constant revision, and was by no means fixed for all time. For example, by now, the modern woman is not restricted to the traditional duties laid down by Manu[3]. A woman can be wife, mother, and teacher, as well as political activist. Often, new duties are added to the traditional ones, rather than simply replacing them.

This is likely to be the case, not only in India, but in certain other countries too, especially in Asia. In more theoretical language, *prima facie* duties (e.g. child care), self-realization (say, the desire to continue one's research) and pragmatic considerations (what will actually work) can combine in a single *swadharma* (personal *dharma*) – no doubt a taxing one. Education has played a role in making some of this possible, and for *some* people. But the freeing of *dharma* from caste takes more than one generation, even though migration and diversification of employment opportunities are helping to loosen caste allegiances, again, in *some* places. No doubt, *dharma* has on many an occasion been invoked to justify the status quo. And in a traditional society it

has been possible to conceive that *dharma* and *swadharma* both have a bearing on *lokasamgraha*, the bringing of people together in the promotion of their welfare. Here we come close to the question dealt with by phenomenologists, the relating of a plurality of lifeworlds to a universal lifeworld which would promote harmony. A reformer, encountering a lifeworld that very evidently needed changing in radical ways, could identify in the concept of *dharma* an ontological ground which at the same time needed to be tended by human endeavour and interpreted in *new* ways by successive generations.

The concept of commitment which is discussed in Chapter 6, attracts my attention on two grounds. Here we have a syllabus of ideas apparently having a religious pedigree, or at least seeming to be a remote evolute of such a pedigree. Current usages have moved far away from this, to examples like the phrase 'committed expenditure' in the context of budget-framing, targets that one may find in 'mission statements', the oath-like conditions that can appear in employment contracts, and in claims made in the annual reports of institutions. I am curious whether this is just a matter of linguistic usage, the vagaries of which are certainly intriguing, or whether notions about steeling and nerving, unjustly satirized by Gilbert Ryle, have seeped from religious contexts into purely secular ones. Secondly, I am unsure whether the concept of commitment is necessarily foreign to traditional societies, for perhaps a concept such as *dharma* bears a hint of its savour.

The phenomenon of multiple allegiance introduced in Chapter 7, relevant to religion in particular, is linked to the concept of *dharma*, and, by default, to the concept of commitment, in the following ways. It illustrates the 'hospitality' of *dharma* to a variety of observances/modes of behaviour, in which multiple participation provides a measure of entry into the lifeworlds of others for whom any one of the practices may constitute the core of their own 'way of life'. We have a contrast with commitment here in that, for example, an occasional stay at Pondicherry does not imply membership of the ashram, nor does listening to a particular expounder of the *Gita* in the local park preclude listening to another exponent of a different text elsewhere. No imperatives follow. Multiple allegiance, as I have noticed it in middle class localities in Bengal, can be taken as a sign of the porosity of Hindu religious life in certain respects, although this is not an all-India phenomenon. It does not seem to lay itself open to the charge of Laodicean blowing hot and cold or hedging one's religious bets lest an 'unknown god' fail to receive due homage. I suspect that multiple allegiance might be a manifestation of the assimilative ethos which has been one of the chief characteristics of Hindu lifeworlds[4] in their great variety. If this is the case, it may be ethically neutral, in that, to 'take in' diverse observances of one's own free will, bears no element of obligation, and to refrain from this can incur neither praise nor blame. But perhaps even assimilation is not a notion which properly applies here. If we compare assimilation with two other possibilities, isolation or integration, your individual whose allegiance appears to be multiple, is rather giving evidence of a personal lifeworld in which several activities, classifiable as belonging to Hindu practice, are integrated.

In Chapter 8 the discussion shifts from multiple allegiance to pluralism and multicultural worlds. The ways in which a lifeworld can be multicultural are so diverse that at times it seems as if each lifeworld must needs be of this order in today's conditions. In some countries with a federal government the dual allegiance of citizens to state and centre is likely to have a further dimension, with a residual link still maintained with countries of origin. I am thinking here of the United States. The immigrant encapsulates multiple histories, and so do children of parents who have married 'out'. The felt need to observe diverse festivals and customs deriving from different sets of ancestors signifies, not merely nostalgia, but an imperative to preserve a link between generations which deserves to be regarded as ethical. The visitor and traveller take with them a cargo of cultural traits which resemble a second skin. Quiddities can be heightened in expression as the contrast with a new environment highlights differences. On the other hand, for some, the possibility of immersion in a new culture can bring about a sense of release from the customary. A still different mode of otherness is experienced through the anonymity that haunts the traveller in a metropolitan city such as New York. Depending on temperament, and, no doubt, economic security, one person might exult, say, in the rich diversity of humanity in Central Park, and another be thrown into a deep sense of isolation, of being adrift in an alien lifeworld.

Contemporary social scientists have been more concerned with the nature of human modes of *interaction*, along with possible sources of conflict, than with the nuanced experiences described by novelists or a writer like W.G. Sebald for whom even a casual encounter sets off trains of reminiscence and historical reflection. Today's multicultural societies, especially in urban contexts, provide channels of enrichment, but also sometimes uneasy juxtaposition. The latter can lead to tension, if not to violence, especially in the face of scarce employment opportunities and / or the activities of troublemakers, ranging from politicians to micro-level 'leaders' specializing in mischief-making. Multicultural situations impact on individuals who already embody their own personal histories and who may have endured much in the process. In contemporary times, the possibilities range from a determination to preserve 'identity' at all costs (ethnic affirmation is one example of this), and a more open-ended attitude which is ready selectively to appropriate the new. In the case of the young, this can result in a certain 'fusion' of cultures, a word currently used to refer to hodge podge styles in the arts, especially music.

However, a person can feel under siege thanks to various aspects of today's pluralistic cultural scene. Refugees face the plight of marginalization in unfamiliar territories where they are not wanted. The preservation of culture then takes second place to the fight for survival. Your conservative hardliner looks upon multiculturalism as a threat rather than an opportunity. Such a view springs from a belief that cultures are bounded and that the bounds need preserving. Challenging this we have the fact of overlapping cultures, and also the contemporary phenomenon of fluid identities caused by the need to switch careers, move to different localities or even countries, to say nothing of coming to terms with new national frontiers drawn in the wake of conflict.

In short, we have evidence that cultures are not rockbottom. This is a hopeful augury in that it opens the way to change, indeed to the insight that often change *ought* to take place.

But there are those who are sceptical about the future of multicultural societies, prompted by the fear of the conflictual possibilities thought to be inherent in them. A question arising from this, and related issues, concerns the extent to which nonviolence is viable in collective life, and this is the theme of Chapter 9. Hobbes' warning about conditions leading to a state of affairs in which the life of citizens is nasty, brutish and short, was central to his argument in favour of a strong sovereign power. He could not have had in mind the possibility of a multicultural polity about which, no doubt, he would have been even more sceptical. Thomas Hobbes' concern was with the legitimation of authority, whereas a great deal of contemporary thinking centres on ways of *curbing* authority, ensuring accountability, decentralizing power, and devising channels of participation for both individual citizens and the various groups into which they are organized. The ethic of nonviolence has a considerable history by now, and its ability to put into operation an alternative source of power which can be tapped by ordinary folk is now recognized as a means available to the socially excluded and exploited. Nonviolent individual protest, apart from situations in which there is a total clamp down on citizens' rights, has been an important way of voicing dissent. Whether collectives can exercise nonviolent power or not has exercised critics in recent times. Doubts have arisen from various quarters. It has been said that violence can be triggered if a group turns into a herd, and that threats to law and order can stem either from those initiating protest, or from those provoked by it. A more theoretical objection questions whether a strategy which might work at the individual level can be extended to a collective, or whether the success of the method does not hinge in great part on a certain gallantry on the part of the 'enemy'. In any case no one would question that infinite harm is wreaked by violence on human lifeworlds, and this is considered in Chapter 10.

The discussion centres on whether the distinction between explicit and implicit violence, which at first sight seems a valid one, really obtains. The evidence which needs taking into account is grim. While the relevant phenomena seem to be especially prevalent in the two thirds world, the current anxiety felt about random violence in cities across the globe shows that lifeworlds, even in prosperous conditions, are not free from vulnerability, and that authorities responsible for public security are often up against forces which they seem unable to control. The fact that ostensibly democratic societies harbour elements that involve implicit and often explicit violence, reveals that behind the failure to recognize symptoms of social pathology, unpardonable inaction on the part of public bodies, the infinite injustices experienced by those living on the margins of society, to say nothing of the extent of public indifference, lie ethical issues which escape the attention of those who otherwise concern themselves professionally with ethical discourse.

Thinking on 'the ethics of war' now has to include the ethics of preemptive warfare. Moral reflection comes up against issues such as what crite-

ria could be applied in assessing the harm brought about by military intervention versus what could be predicted as the expected outcome of inaction. The unthinkable has become part of everyday experience. When decision-making at the highest level takes place, the policies opted for so often involve actions which were no part of the agenda on which a particular government was voted into power. This raises wide-ranging matters to do with the very concept of representative government. The remedy is said to be unceasing vigilance on the part of the citizenry, even though the most definitive expressions of public opinion so often make little impact on those who hold power. The twentieth century was strewn with massive evidence of how implicit violence developed into large scale catastrophe. If any single imperative emerges from the disturbing data which had to be set out in this chapter it is the imperative to deal with the deteriorating conditions which are already threatening the lifeworlds, if not of the people in our immediate vicinity, then of those whose faces we have not seen. The extent of ethical responsibility in an indivisible world is yet to be realized in all its demanding implications.

Chapter 11, on some Indian treatments of evil and suffering, illustrates further my identifying of material for philosophical reflection in the world around us, the 'text' of our own lifeworlds and of those with which we come in contact. This includes ordinary speech, turns of phrase, proverbial wisdom, and spontaneous comments mirroring attitudes which have taken shape over generations. I do not see written textual references as lifebuoys in the churning waters of the everyday. They *may* crystallize whole styles of thinking succinctly, but if they are extracted from lifeworlds, as they usually are, this tends to show itself. On the whole, I prefer to swim in those everyday waters in which we all strive to keep afloat, hopefully without succumbing to whirlpools or monsters of the deep. The Hindu lifeworld, and this, of course, is very differentiated, reveals vivid signs of awareness of the existence of contrary powers, and, as is often the case in cultures with elements of ancient provenance, religious imagination expresses itself in mythologies in order to illumine the hostile factors encountered in day-to-day living. The ethical stance called for against a backdrop of such dramatic envisaging, has been above all, *endurance*, indispensable in agricultural conditions where the extremes of drought and flood can be more devastating than invading armies. A lifeworld that takes suffering for granted runs the risk of underplaying the imperative to conquer it. It was left to reformist thinkers in more recent times, to resort less to the *karma* theory as a tool of 'explanation', and work out a praxis whose implications would be in the economic, social and political spheres. Specific evils need to be identified and tackled in all their particularity, lest the lifeworlds of the majority remain at the level of deprivation and underprivilege. Today, more than ever, and especially in the two thirds world, the imperative is not to endure but rather to put an end to injustice, oppression, and the many other evils that have brought about the immiseration of millions of people across the globe for centuries.

In a very different vein, Chapter 12 explores *Lebenswelt* through Indian art, with the Jain temple as an example. I suggest that the image of

convergence of horizons that is associated with Gadamer's hermeneutic, and in a more theological way in the work of Teilhard de Chardin, can be replaced by a contrary image, that of a centrality, from which directions point outwards. Kinaesthetic experience and vegetative growth – the latter being 'writ large' on temple friezes in India, both as embellishment, and intrinsic to the representation of trees and creepers, with all the rich symbolism invoked thereby – provide paradigms of this. My 'reading' of such phenomena is that the kaleidoscopic detail of so much of Indian art (and possibly belonging to much of South East Asian art as such) belongs to an expansion of sensibility which is part and parcel of the rooting of Indian lifeforms in nature; rooted, but reaching out in multidirectionality towards the cosmic. If vegetative growth is the clue, the *Ur* source is no doubt the seed. Multiplicity of meanings, when taken with all seriousness, leads less to consensus, than to a letting be, an amicable *Gelassenheit*, an exulting in plurality. Exploring this line of interpretation makes the way Gandhi draws on a well of ideas from Jain thought increasingly intelligible. The notions of growth and continuity can accommodate metamorphosis without becoming tangled either with the idea of a single direction, or, alternatively, a randomness which would dismay. The sedimented meanings which belong to heritage most surely appear in new guises as the generations succeed each other. The ethical imperative faced by the inheritors lies in the need to judge what should be reclaimed/retained, and what should remain in the past. And the new wine should not intoxicate. Most of all, the plurality of viewpoints warrants welcoming, in token of the inexhaustibility to which separate lifeworlds bear witness, each in its own idiom.

Chapter 13 provides a different variation on the theme of lifeworlds, finding ethical content in relationships in which qualms, disquiet, the uncomfortable sense of lost opportunities and hardheartedness, reflect moral unease. Our relations with others are finely tuned, ranging through strangeness, anonymous functionality, acquaintance, good neighbourliness, familiarity, to various modalities of friendship and love. On an analogy with the importance of the implicit which I considered in Chapter 10, I turn now to those minimal modes of communication which yet bear stirrings of conscience. Anecdotes and descriptions of streams of consciousness intersect with philosophical questionings. These bring out the interrelation between self-understanding and understanding of others, and show how this is intrinsic to the mutual impinging of lifeworlds. Overtures and resistances, liking and disliking, curiosity and indifference, are all part of the delicate web woven in the course of our relations with others. To say this is to draw attention to a range of ethical involvements which are different in tonality from the major crises focused upon by the existentialists. Moreover, at this level of descriptive analysis, we are thinking in terms of *persons*, rather than 'selves' in all their philosophical formality. However, this collapses into the relations between anonymous beings when we are in the world of officialdom, or simply, in a context which relates those concerned only in terms of the respective *functions* of each. Even here there can be a breakthough when the 'functionary' is seen as a human being, and perhaps a suffering one. For example, I have engaged a cycle rickshaw

in order to go a short distance as I have heavy things to carry. I then notice the rickshaw wallah has an injury to his foot, and at once look out for another rickshaw, whereupon he begs to be taken on as he has had no customer since morning and must earn to feed his family. So I get in his rickshaw, feeling that I am an accomplice in an unjust system, and partly salve my conscience by paying him more than the standard rate. Worse, I am rather relieved, since there was no other mode of transport in sight. Excuse and self-disgust jostle uneasily in my mind.

Human intercourse accommodates shifts of key which may be temporary or long lasting. I sit behind my desk, and get on with the files accumulated over the weekend. Then, out of the blue, an old friend comes to visit me. I leave my desk, change gears, and sit with him in another part of the room meant for such occasions. But neither of us can spare much time, so when I rise, this is the signal for the end of the meeting and I return to my 'function' in the swivel chair behind the desk. Even the chair is a token of my function. I can swivel to the phone, the bookcase just behind me, and so on. The paraphernalia of the lifeworld I belong to in the office, indicates precisely what is expected of me. At one time in India, to 'take over charge' entitled an officer to certain trappings – an inkwell, an old-fashioned pen, and ink-blotter – and this practice continued (perhaps still does in some places) even long after such things were in use. The point was that signatures would be needed, and still are needed. I recall a particular officer who acquired a printed motto enjoining 'Think before you speak' which was turned towards the visitor's chair. This was not duplicated on the side of the motto which faced the officer, as was found out by an enterprising student who turned it round when the great man was out of the room. Needless to say, 'being in one's seat', symbolized power.

My lifeworlds overlap with those of others. There are nodal points of intersection where my duty is clear, e.g., I must not keep you waiting; if I am a teacher, I must be sure to be available during my 'office hours'; I must not make it obvious that there is somewhere else I would rather be. But, environing each situation in which I am involved, there is an ambience in the creation of which I have the chance to make things better rather than worse, even when this is describable only in negative terms e.g. not to raise my voice, to smile, or at least not frown, to apologize rather than to let an injury fester, even perhaps when I am the injured party. In short, in recognizing that lifeworlds pose ethical issues, and in responding accordingly, at least in clear cases, it is possible, even in a small measure, to be an 'under-labourer' (Locke's choice of word in another context) in the cause of peaceful living.

Chapter 14, which begins with Disneyland, is written with a bow to Mark Twain whose ramblings never fail to be insightful. In terms of musical metaphors it serves as a Scherzo amidst much that has been grave if not '*schwer und dunkel*' in previous chapters. In spite of the bad press it has had in some academic circles, I found in Disney Land much to fascinate – a constructed lifeworld which, for the duration of a visit, enabled citizens to be entertained, reminded of the past, and above all, gave them a chance to take

part in a harmless fairytale. This particular innocent abroad noticed especially the impinging of technology on a legendary world, how the fearsome could be domesticated, and how the merging of illusion and reality seemed to leap over the wall and continue beyond it. It seemed odd that, as far as I know, feminists, vocal as they are in other contexts, have not commented on the eclipsing of Minnie Mouse, whose appearance was very minimal.

My ramblings extend from talking about fun things to do and watch, to fun things to say. Obsession with propositions and the dullest of sentences has led philosophers to neglect linguistic sallies such as jokes, riddles, and expletives. Likewise, the lifeworlds of clowns, beggars, tramps and hobos all provide oblique but immensely important perspectives on what human lifeworlds can be like. I did not aim to do more than to stir up this witches' brew. As for what ethical pointer may be hidden in these less run of the mill data, I suspect it is a simple one – the provision of nonviolent weaponry against those who think that cultures are incommensurable and that we are doomed to regard each other with suspicion. I can laugh at your jokes, for the most part, and enjoy your 'fun' things, and hope the compliment can be reciprocated. There is also an injunction to weep with those that weep. But if *sarvam duhkham* is to be disproved, sympathy, or, for that matter, indignation, is not enough. In the Epilogue, the ethical imperatives stemming from the enormous diversity of human lifeworlds recall attention from the many variations back to the central theme.

NOTES

1 In these studies I refer to 'man' in the sense of *anthropos*.

2 Community (Heb.).

3 Whether these were descriptive of what obtained in his time, or were prescriptive, has not been agreed upon by scholars.

4 See my 'Reflections on religious pluralism in the Indian context', in *Culture and Modernity*, East-West philosophic perspectives, ed. Eliot Deutsch, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1991.

Chapter 2

Intersubjectivity

The problem of intersubjectivity, in some ways, is of epistemologists' devising. For if knowledge is seen in terms of the relation between subject and object, and there are many subjects, the question as to how subjects are related to each other, immediately poses itself. The very term 'subject', outside grammar and politics, is a philosophical one. In ordinary life, we speak of people or persons, and not of subjects. It is also the case that we are aware that knowing others is not like knowing objects. We build up this knowledge through various modes of communication involving sound, speech, and behaviour. Our lifeworlds bind us to others in manifold ways. But, to borrow John Macmurray's language, there is also a rhythm of withdrawal and return about our life with others, and there is a sense in which we are mysteries to each other. This is the background out of which the discourse of intersubjectivity has grown, and it provides a backdrop to philosophical analyses of lifeworlds.

And yet it might not be untrue to say that the concreteness of lifeworlds gives rise to a discourse counter to that of intersubjectivity, leading us into the familiar world of *living* with our fellows. There is something inevitable, perhaps, about the way that discussion about lifeworlds moves between philosophy, the social sciences and commonsense. As far as philosophy is concerned, I think that Kant's difficulty over relating the transcendental, empirical and noumenal, has not yet been overcome, nor has a problem arising from the Hegelian legacy, that of relating history as such to personal histories, been solved either. The thinkers I focus on in this chapter were heirs not only of Kant and Hegel, but also of Maimonides, the Kabbalah and Hasidism. To recognize in intersubjectivity a misnomer for an interpersonal situating whose fulfillment lies in *hevrutah* or togetherness, provides an insight worth pondering over at a time when solitude may appear to be the only alternative to extreme gregariousness and the herd mentality.

This is what is set us as a task. How does the "We" establish itself through the tantalizing boundaries of skin, words, cultures, time gaps (then and now), intermittency of communication, the recoil from togetherness in aid of self-preservation, the natural pendulum between the towards and the away from. Or is the "We" primary, an undifferentiated matrix out of which emerges/develops the "I" and the "You".

Kant's Transcendental Ego, which is no one's ego in particular, but the condition of the possibility of experience, might serve as a starting point. The associated notions of *denken überhaupt* and the synthetic unity of apperception likewise are fertile, were it not for their strictly intellectual character. This brings to mind a comment made by Feuerbach in his graduate thesis of 1828 on 'On reason, one, universal, infinite'[1]. It reads as a panegyric to reason, and yet there is a sting in the tail: "In thinking I am thus mankind not the individual, but no-one in particular". The Hegelian *Geist* in comparison is far

denser, thicker, with transcendental logic left behind. The master/slave analysis is a treatment of *recognition* alternative to Kant's third moment of synthesis (i.e., synthesis of recognition in a concept), providing a "We" grounded in reciprocal recognition but pegged in terms of inequality. It is this inherent lack of parity that Sartre struggles with and that issues in his rather skew-eyed analysis of love. While Kant's opus sparked off this train of thought in epistemology it must be admitted that the import of his ethical writings leads in a different direction. Following through the advice of the Paralogisms, the soul provides a useful regulative Idea *vis à vis* our commerce with *others*. The 'end' idea (the advice not to treat others as means) likewise is to be applied to others rather than to oneself. The *telos* of a kingdom of ends serves as a reminder of the dignity of persons. No existentialist could put it better. This image prevails until he reflects in his old age not so much on theodicy as on the radical evil within man himself. There can be no surer subverter of the "We" than this. The "We" is utterly mocked in the barbarities of the torture chamber and the concentration camp. Kant's original confidence in the "We" (I am reading this into his *oeuvre* as an Enlightenment thinker) was founded on the capacity of reason, as he thought, to be practical. In other words it is an ethical "We" that he talks about. It is spelt out in the kind of discourse generated by moral reflection, and which, for him, was intimately connected with the possibility of civil society. We are at a considerable remove from what I call the negotiated "We" which stemmed from British philosophical sources, and may well have had as one of its roots a longer history of parliamentarianism than prevailed on the continent. That is as may be.

The Hegelian "We" is of such gigantic proportions that it is no wonder that liberal thinkers boggled at it. However, other possibilities were available in the basket of ideas available in the 1840s. Feuerbach surfaces with two which could reveal a dilemma, man's awareness of himself as a species and the distinction between I and Thou, for the former is at a level of high generality, and the latter shows itself in specific dyadic relations. But Feuerbach saw these as two sides of the same coin[2]. He writes:

> The single man for himself possesses the essence of man neither in himself as a moral being nor in himself as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community and unity of man with man; it is a unity, however, which rests only on the reality of the distinction between I and Thou.

The discourse of alienation as proffered by several writers of the time can be seen as specifying the various ways in which what one could call the primitive "We" is ruptured. Moses Hess's article on "The Essence of Money" (1983-4) shows how the money economy subverts the concept of humanity, and Marx's well-known chapter on "The Mystery of the Fetishistic Character of Commodities" in *Das Kapita*l works out a similar point with reference to the capitalistic mode of production. The discourse of rights also seems to tee-

ter on the edge of an associated dilemma. The concept of rights is four-squarely based on the implications of individuality. But the rights of one coexist with the rights of another. This situation provides both the ground for conflicts of rights and the possibility of a joint affirmation of rights as in the case of co-ordinated action on class lines. This is but one example which points up the fact that matters concerning "We" are more likely to centre round issues in morals and politics than in epistemology. As such, the "We" is seen as polarized not only to the "I" but to the "They". Political pamphleteering at a more popular level often notoriously invests the "They" with an aura of sinister plurality. But does all this suggest that with the mention of plural terms we have virtually abandoned talk of persons? I do not think that this is the case.

If the language of 'alienation' (*Entfremdung*) uncovered the problematic of "We" in a philosophical way there was another concept which focused on it in a context which spanned literature and philosophy. I refer to *Bildung*, a kind of ego-centered *paideia* which, paradigmatically in Wilhelm v. Humboldt, follows through individual *enteleché* in a single-minded manner, with others involved only in a quasi-instrumental capacity. We encounter here the agonies of romantic love portrayed in the literature of the times and especially in *Faust*. The Romantic theme of the wanderer (cf.Werther) and the theme of unrequited love, or at least of relationships which start in ecstasy and end in disillusion, provide evidence of the problematic of the "We" which the philosopher should not neglect. Interestingly enough, both the romantics and Marx and Engels wrestle with a "We" broken loose from familial relationships. Romantic lovers are usually doomed thanks to the operation of contrary powers or, even more unkindly, the inability of passion to sustain itself. But what about the class idea? This is built on a commonality of interest and, as such, not entirely free of an element of negotiation. Having lost their chains, the primal "We" of the workers would presumably shine forth, or so the theory went.

But whether we can properly speak of a primal "We" remains a question to haunt us. It certainly haunts all discussions of man's species being precisely that form of being which for Marx and Engels is ruptured through the private ownership of the means of production. For all the economic terms in which the argument is cast, the social analysis remains grounded, it seems to me, in the deepest moral reflection. What is advocated is a radical change in the socio-economic structure of society so that man can recover his humanity and enjoy the "We" of membership of a just social order. The simplifications of the 1844 manuscripts have to be seen for what they are, part of a critique of an existing situation rather than a blueprint for tomorrow. That the "We" of class affiliation could collapse, thanks to the subversive effect of wage differentials and other seductions, could not be anticipated. Romantic lovers, and social revolutionaries no less, seemed fated to succumb to a 'world' with which yet another set of contemporaries were contending – the evangelicals across the Channel. The myths of perfect love, a perfect society, and a heavenly kingdom, no doubt sprang out of diverse fermentations of thought. In each,

however, it may not be too far-fetched to say, lay unpearled and unfulfilled the quest of a paradigmatic "We".

I wish to say a little about Husserl next, with more in the next chapter, and this means moving forwards in time, although backwards to Kant, in so far as Husserl keeps as close as he can to a transcendental approach. Or one can put it this way: Marx and Engels at bottom set their sights on *Gemeinschaft*, believing that the obstacles to it are at the level of *Gesellschaft*. Husserl was very aware of the currency of relationships since he came to phenomenology via psychology, but seeks an enabling condition for our multiple strategies, the onion skin which is neither kernel nor root. Whatever is said in his *Cartesian Meditation V*, which provides the relevant text for this whole area of enquiry, presupposes an important point carried over from his earlier work, which amounts to a telling rebuttal of any charge of formalism as far as the Transcendental Ego is concerned. This, unlike Kant's cognitive subject, bears traces of the sedimented layers of personal history and this means that Husserl makes room for a very queer fish indeed, a kind of material *a priori*. I believe that in his excursus into the possibility of a transcendental "We" something very similar can be found. The Fifth Meditation bears the rather unfortunate heading of "Intersubjective Monadology". No doubt this is symptomatic of what seems to dog almost any attempt to establish intersubjectivity transcendentally, namely, a magnetic pull towards the Aristotelian concept of *entelechè* which after all, whether in Leibniz or elsewhere, has its locus in particularity. Apart from this Leibnizian cargo, Husserl also carried another weighty piece of baggage, a Cartesian set of terms which he saw fit to utilize for his French audience. He speaks of the transcendental "We" as the 'subject' of the objective world, which, I suppose, might throw some light on the commonality of the world investigated by the sciences. Husserl's problem, within the terms of his own philosophical system is first of all how what is itself a centre of constituting can also itself be constituted, and then, translating this into the plural, what kind of bridge-building operation can link one centre of constituting activities with another. Otherness and commonality at the level of consciousness is not easy to reconcile. For example, he says, and I paraphrase, that the liaison with others is *sui generis*, an effective communion which, to be precise, is the transcendental condition of the existence of a world of men and things. This is reckoned to come about through what he calls 'pairing', which might mean, *inter alia*, that the other plays the role of counterpart *vis à vis* me and *vice versa*. This brings in the question of reciprocity, a concept used by some other writers too, for example, Maurice de Nédoncelle and Martin Buber. But how we could ever know, within the framework of separate consciousnesses (behaviour being an unsure guide since we can pretend) about the other side, remains problematic. In fact, it may be more easy to identify situations when reciprocity is absent. Maybe this is why he says (the translation is mine):

> ...each man is for another a physical, psycho-physical and psychic being constituting an open and infinite world which

> one can approach but which on the whole one never penetrates.[3]

He also utilizes empathy and analogy as tools for trying to unlock a door which it seems hard to open. His most fruitful strategy, however, is his invocation of the horizon idea:

> The secondary world is necessarily given in the form of a horizon, that is to say it is accessible in taking off from the primordial world in an orderly series of acts and experiences.

Whether a horizon can properly be said to be given is a further matter I cannot go into here. But there is much to be said, after all, in favour of the *approximative* character of the "We". Bearing in mind the separate 'lived times' of the parties concerned, their discrete lifeworlds, the inherent perspectivism of all single standpoints, to say nothing of masking strategies and discontinuities at the dyadic level, and the snakepit of conflicting interests in collectivities, the "We" seems more like a *telos* than a starting point or presupposition. Husserl never really seems to abandon Augustinian rootedness in the subjective. That such a view of subjectivity has much to do with Christian reckoning of salvation in highly individualistic terms gives us pause. Husserl is heir to a mainstream European tradition. To 'experience' another intentionally (i.e. as a content of consciousness) is probably impossible, and in any case would not amount to 'meeting'. To prune away all transcendental elements from the interlocking of empirical selves or histories where each is a loose and shifting nexus integrated more or less in certain relatively stable patterns, would be, for Husserl, to succumb to what he dubs the standpointof the 'positive sciences'.

Why not only Husserl but some other philosophers, too, thought this to be an undesirable alternative can only be briefly indicated here. Not only Max Scheler, but G.E. Moore whose philosophical affiliations were vastly different, regarded the interpersonal realm as a locus of value. If there were to be a place for value in a world of fact it was surely here. To grant the thinness of the fabric[4] of human relations – its sheer contingency and incompleteness, the painfulness of the erection and demolition of defences – is yet not to deny a transparency uniquely able to allow the breaking in of the transempirical. Husserl takes us thus far. That successors who drew on his thinking were able to go beyond this by removing his methodological *epoché* shows that his attempt to articulate a *framework* for interpersonal relations could bear fruit.

At about the same time that Husserl developed some of Kant's ideas in a phenomenological direction, Hermann Cohen was drawing on the Kantian insight that the relation between man and man was essentially a moral rather than an epistemic one. Cohen takes into account Kant's thinking on the concept of humankind (which he echoed in his own discussion of *Menschheit/ Humanität*), plumbing moreover, in his working out of the religion of rea-

son, the rich Judaic sources which deal with the concepts of otherness (the concepts of stranger, brother, neighbour, foreigner). Mending relations with others is made the vehicle of mending relations with God through the very structuring of the Yom Kippur ritual. The message pinpoints that there is no "We" without forgiveness, a category which surely straddles the ethical/religious divide.

The stages in Cohen's understanding of the meaning of "We" can be traced from the 1904 work *Ethik des reinen Willens* which reads as a response to Kant's *Tugendlehre*, i.e., the second part of his *Metaphysic of Morals* (1797), which deals with his doctrine of virtue. Cohen maintains that honour (*Ehre*) is derived from the 'You' which is the source of the 'We'. Honour involves seeing myself in the other, whereas love, he says, involves seeing the other in myself. To say that totality inhabits each you – a linguistic usage which sounds awkward in English – seeks to convey, I believe, the peculiar relation of universality and pecularity which the interpersonal situation embodies. Each 'you' I address is a different you when the 'yous' are successive separate persons. But the same might be said of this apparently single 'you' before me from moment to moment. A few moments ago your smile spoke of content. But now a different mood sweeps over your face much as clouds sweep over the sky. Is there an *allgemeine Du* or an *allgemeine Wir*, a you in general or a we in general? Cohen comes near to inheriting a Kantian transcendentalism at this point. But in the work under discussion he still keeps to the language of virtues derived from the *Tugendlehre*, and the totality referred to is the totality of the human condition of man as a moral being. The other person is the human in its particularity and finiteness. Or, put in another way, humanity is both the goal of human endeavour, a state of being where all treat each other as ends, and what is instantiated in each particular individual. This view was also held by Franz Rosenzweig for whom man inheres in mankind, and mankind is 'a kind of *telos* that has to be recognized in every human individual'[5]. Awareness of both aspects of this situation invests our actions towards the other with that universality which, following Kant, he identifies with the ethical.

The treatment becomes less formalistic in a work on the ethics of Maimonides published in 1908, *Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis*. He writes[6]:

> …there exists no I without a Thou. *Reah* means 'the other', the one who is like you. He is the Thou of the I. Selfhood is the result of an unending relation of I and Thou as well as its abiding ideal.…In short, selfhood ensues from the interaction between I and Thou.

He does not mention the "We" in this passage, but the stance taken suggests that the I and the Thou are internal to the We. After all, the We is not only grammatically plural but ontologically such. Some circularities may not be vicious.

But Cohen does not stop here. His most mature thought came after he became a *baal teshuvah*, that is, after his return from assimilation when he discovered the insights of Eastern Jewry. These insights took their first shape in the Berlin lectures of 1913 and 1914 and then in *Die Religion der Vernunft* which appeared posthumously in 1919. What earlier veers between postulate and goal now can be seen as *promise*. It is in fact the prophetic element which enables Cohen's treatment of the We to move from its transcendental moorings. It is in this work that his concept of correlation is introduced, a concept already utilized by Kant in one way and to be adopted for quite a different purpose later by Paul Tillich. The wineskins of Kantian critical idealism are no longer able to contain Cohen's ideas. The idiom henceforth will be Biblical, and, as Leo Strauss notes, also political. The key concept now is the fellowman (*Mitmensch*). He writes that the correlation of man and God cannot be actualized if the correlation of man and man is not first included. The category of personhood now becomes explicit. *Nephesh* or concrete embodied existence is presupposed. I often think that the whole discourse of persons would not have been so laboured if the concept of *nephesh* had been adopted by the gentile world. But Hellenism dies hard.

The individual is he who stands before God, and standing in this context connotes the stance of worship. The others that stand *with* me constitute the 'we' of the covenantal community. Cohen does not arrive at this position all at once. It is worked out through an elucidation of concepts in two languages – *Nebenmensch* (the next man), and *Mitmensch* (fellowman) and *ger* (stranger), *nokri* (foreigner) and *reah* (the other). What springs to notice in its topicality is the role given to pity in bringing about the transition from regarding another as 'next to' or 'near' and regarding him or her as 'fellow' or 'with'. Pity first arises for the stranger, 'For ye were strangers in a strange land', and so the stranger should claim attention along with the orphan and the widow. Put philosophically rather than Biblically, the 'we' takes birth in the discovery that the other is as you are, once a stranger. Put religiously, this finds expression in the words of Rabbi Akiba: 'Thou shalt love your other (*Reah*), he is as you'. To do otherwise is not so much to treat Thou as It as to treat You as He, the neutral term which connotes indifference. Put in the plural, this is the 'they' of those with whom we do not concern ourselves, the 'they' and 'them' – refugees, minorities, the marginalized. Cohen goes on to identify poverty, unrestricted property and war as the abrogation of 'we'. From this we can gauge how 'we' indicates not only the dyadic relation of man and man, but the relation between peoples, between nations. Truth or faithfulness (the word *emeth* means both) lies at the heart of the 'we' of persons and the 'we' of nations.

With this, Cohen's thinking echoes messianic motifs which he found fully in keeping with the Kantian-style conception of what is set as a task, a new era and a united mankind. The route indicated is one of suffering and compassion, a rediscovery of the 'I' purged of selfishness, a rejoicing in the Thou and an affirmation of the 'we' of common humanity. A further emphasis can be found in Rosenzweig's development of the theme of love of the neigh-

bour in that such a love converts my personal time into the time of responsibility. A strong thread of ideas can be traced from this to Levinas' treatment of responsibility for the other. Love of the neighbour for Rosenzweig redeems the other from tragic self-enclosure, and presumably serves to redeem oneself also from the same tragedy. The question that might suggest itself over this syllabus of ideas is whether what might well be a non-symmetrical relation can properly be described by the term 'we'. There seems no inherent objection to such an ascription unless 'we' is to be reserved for paradigmatically mutual situations. Oblique, but highly interesting commentary on this can be found in contemporary discussion among halakhists on the subject of Amalekites and Edomites and their more recent counterparts as identified by some in Israel today.

At first sight there would seem to be some link between Hermann Cohen and Martin Buber to whose ideas about 'we' I wish to turn next. The evidence, however, is inconclusive. His biographer Maurice Friedman writes that Buber began his first draft of *I* and *Thou* in 1916 and completed it by the autumn of 1919, the year in which Cohen's *Religion der Vernunft* appeared posthumously. Buber's own comment was that he had read it too late for the book to have influenced his own thought[7]. They had disagreed about the war, and also about Zionism, to which Cohen was opposed. Cohen never gave up his faith in the state and yet failed to see the need for a state for the Jewish people. Philosophically Cohen's orientation remained rationalist in the Kantian manner, while Buber had been a pupil of Simmel and Dilthey. Buber denied not only the influence of Cohen, but also that of Rosenzweig to whom he had been very close indeed, and that of Ebner. It is, in fact, necessary to note the particular route by which Buber moved from a form of mysticism to his own characteristic insights into the interpersonal realm, and then, more specifically, to the horizon of the 'we' which for him is eventually found in *hagshamah* or community, especially after his move to Israel. I only sketch this in barest outline.

For German scholars, the difference between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* pinpointed a distinction masked by the English word 'experience'. The experience of things, i.e., observation, was different from the interiority of lived experience. The latter notion no doubt owed much to Kant's treatment of inner sense, that is to say, to the temporal dimension of inner life. But as far as interiority was concerned, a much earlier stream of thought, found in the discourse of religious mysticism, purported to provide access to the *non-temporal*. If this had not been so the corpus of mystical writing would have been of purely psychological interest. So when Buber undertook doctoral work on Nicholas of Cusa and Jacob Boehme, he found that the whole concept of *Erlebnis* or lived experience needed rethinking. The thing to emphasize now was not the contrast with knowledge of objects but the capacity which mystics appeared to have to enter into a special kind of *Erlebnis* through which unity could be attained 'with the world spirit'. What the latter phrase might mean in post-Hegelian times was, of course, a moot point.

While Buber was a student at the University of Berlin he used to attend a club called the *Neue Gemeinschaft* where all such high-flying was tempered by at least three other sorts of intellectual enquiry. The first centred on the empirical interests of the psychologists who were exploring diverse methodologies for their own researches. Whether psychology deals with *Erfahrung* or *Erlebnis*, or something else, after all, is a vital matter if one is deciding how 'positive' a science psychology can be. The second took up the question posed by Simmel – how can subjective minds interact socially? The third trend, under the inspiration of Dilthey, posed questions about life and lifeworlds, something which was not to be conflated with *Geist* in the Hegelian sense. The problem was that the notion of the 'lived through' was scarcely adequate to express either the mystical experience or the relation between one person and another.

The three trends had as their origin the diverging interests of the disciplines involved, a divergence which throws light on the very different approaches of psychologists, sociologists and philosophers to this day. Psychologists became engaged with diverse data derivable from behaviour and speech, retaining the term 'personality' largely in the context of the analysis of development; sociologists turned to human interactive structures; and philosophers were left with the task of finding a via media between *Geist* and *Leben*. This was the situation at the early stage of Buber's thinking. His move away from the *Erlebnismystik* presented in his book *Daniel: Dialogues on Realization* (1913) is significantly different from the move taken by those who found in the notion of *Existenz* the key to avoiding historicism on the one hand and biologism on the other. The German sources of his thought, including in this the work of Nietzsche, are not difficult to trace.

Not to be forgotten, however, is the rich Hasidic strand which relates intensities of experience, especially religious experience, to everyday life, finds springs of action in non-intellectual powers, and locates the proper employment of all human endowments in the micro community. The environing of human activity which at about the same time the scientifically minded were identifying in *Umwelt* (a concept derived from animal studies) Buber found, via Hasidism, in the human world, resulting in what he called *die Ontologie des Zwischenmenschen*, the ontology of between man and man. All this finds expression in his *I* and *Thou*, the book by which he became known in the English-speaking world. His treatment of 'meeting' provided a rallying point for personalist critiques of objectivism, and within theology, additional grist to the mill of those deriving personalist analogies either way, from God to man or man to God in lieu of the analogies from nature prevalent in classical cosmological thinking. The impact on German Protestant theology was enormous – a theme for another occasion. Buber's work could be hailed by sympathizers in England who were out of tune with the prevailing mood of British philosophy in the thirties and forties. This mood was characterized by its almost obsessive interest in perception, no doubt in reaction to the questions of high generality treated by Bradley and other idealist philosophers. And yet the *problematic* of 'we' does not really feature in *I* and *Thou*, the main

thrust of the work being the phenomenological elucidation of a realm distinct from that of the I/It relation.

What I now wish to suggest is that Buber was able to move out of his *Erlebnismystik* stage into the analysis of I and Thou, and beyond this into *hagshamah*, in ways which owe a great deal to his relation to A.D. Gordon, founder of the first *kvutza* (commune) formed in 1909 at Deganiyah. Gordon's "Letters from the Land of Israel" was published in *Der Jude* in 1916 and this was the year in which Buber started work on *I* and *Thou*. Descriptions applied by admirers to Gordon were always regarded as an embarrassment by him, and this includes both the use of the word 'mystic' and the phrase 'the religion of labour'. If mysticism involves a flight from the real world, from the bodily and from responsibility, then Gordon was not a mystic. Labour, hard manual labour, involves the 'we' in harsh relation to nature. The possibility of this was grounded in his understanding of human consciousness.

Two concepts in particular elucidate this, *havvayah* (experience) and *hakarah* (consciousness). Each individual embodies the expanding energies of nature, and this means that man is firmly *rooted* in nature. This is the source of experience. It is also the source of creativity. The human being gradually develops an expanded sense of personality, gaining sustenance from an environing world which includes parents, family, organic and inorganic nature. What Gordon calls consciousness is a kind of awakening, the emergence of 'I' within the flow of experience. This self-affirming capacity gives rise both to the development of personality and to a sense of loneliness. Ruptures of creativity occur both within the individual and in society when consciousness breaks away from experience in acts of self-assertion and claims to power, which Gordon sees typified in the aggressive forms of totalitarian collectivity.

Since what he indicates by the word experience is an outward-looking flow of the inner towards the environment, including society, we have here a way of thinking that has much in common with what more recently is described as open-mindedness. When experience flows through consciousness, creative energies deploy themselves outward in an non-exploitative manner. This is the life of expansion in which the energies and labours of all can be enlisted and it is here that the 'we' shows itself. The prophetic nature of Gordon's writings derives much from Kabbalistic ideas, using them with a new import. Expansion (otherwise a characteristic of the divine) becomes the key to man's own nature and likewise his overflow of energies. Human creativity is seen as drawing the divine into the earthly, enabling man to ascend to the divine, but an ascent made in community. Eliezer Schweid speaks of this as an 'inverted version of the Kabbalistic doctrine of flow and emanation'[8].

Gordon, it seems to me, enables Buber to work out to the fullest extent how the *Verwirklichung* (realization) foreshadowed in his early work must be cashed in terms of the world of human relations, and, via the I/Thou nexus, be embodied in *hevrutah* or togetherness. This pulls together the many issues that occupied Buber throughout a long life of thought and action – spirit and life, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, state and society, the teacher/pupil

relation, the Jewish people and the nation – all of which involved the 'we' in various ways. Reality can be hallowed through work, not the mechanical work of the wage-slave, but the kind of work Buber eventually saw for himself in the *kibbutzim* of Israel. He did not idealize work as some social theorists had done, but rather, in his many involvements with a variety of social issues, which included Arab-Jewish relations and his serious questioning of the ethics of the Eichmann trial, he in fact explored the *hazards* in the face of which the 'we' concretizes itself in fact.

Buber's explicit discourse on the 'we' falls within the inaugural course of lectures he gave as Professor of Social Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1938. In those lectures, *inter alia*, he had occasion to provide a critique of Heidegger's *Mitsein* which, on Heidegger's own showing, belongs to the level of the inauthentic since, *pace* Heidegger, the fundamental ontological question is not man's relation to others but his relation to himself. In other words Heidegger's treatment is monological.

We have now to see why Buber should have hesitated to use the term 'we'. His analysis of distance and relation[9] identifies the difficulty of how to reconcile the quiddity of persons and the circumstance that their very being is a function of their relation to others. To tackle this almost involves assigning a greater weightage to the Thou than to the I. There is something very contemporary about Buber's perception of what he calls "the polyphony of the person's existence" if we recast this in terms of a nexus between themes which constantly meet, collide, and yet gather together in a recognizable pattern. Could there be in this an echo of the reference Dilthey, Buber's teacher, once made to the tonality of the day, finding *in* time and *over* time the development of themes which at any vertical cross section of counterpoint sound like a painful dissonance? It is almost as if, because of the dialogical analysis which is the nerve of his thinking, he is wary of speaking of 'we', on account of the dynamic fluidity of any particular I/Thou relation. However, in his inaugural lectures, he does speak of an essential 'we' parallel to the 'essential Thou'. This is the basis of any particular 'we' that may arise. He writes:

> By *We* I mean a community of several independent persons, who have reached a self and self-responsibility, the community resting on the basis of this self and self-responsibility, and being made possible by them[10].

He further says:

> Only men who are capable of truly saying *Thou* to one another can truly say *We* with one another[11].

Since the 'we' for Buber is not conceivable without the I/Thou relation, it is realizable *par excellence* in small communities. The way in which he saw nationhood in terms of a 'community of communities' was spelt out by him in his addresses to *kibbutzniks* once he was in Israel, and his consultations

with educators on a host of occasions in different countries. Living through the terrors of the thirties and forties on the continent as he had, he always distrusted the 'we' which was based in any measure on power. The collectivisms of the times had an ugly face.

Extreme individualism amounted no less to an opting out of the interpersonal realm. Buber had studied psychiatry in Leipzig, Berlin and Zürich, and, although he did not analyse the maladies of the times through the lens of psychopathology to the extent that Karl Jaspers did, he was too interested in human nature to ignore what psychologists were saying about it. Such concerns led him to dialogue with Carl Rogers in April 1957. The meeting was of interest for the way in which Buber detected a 'power' element in Rogers' techniques which were otherwise reckoned to be non-directive. It was on this occasion, moreover, that Buber characterized dialogue by mentioning three elements – surprise, the prizing of otherness, and acceptance of the other as he is, confirming him in his potentiality. This would seem to imply a holding back from any attempt to change the other.

To return to the discourse of 'we', Buber's later expositions of the dialogic relation throw further light on the role of speech in communication. Speech presupposes distance, since speech occurs *between* persons. Through speech there can come into being a mutuality of 'making present'. What is clear, however, is that the 'we' does not express fusion, but rather, as John Macmurray puts it in his Gifford Lectures, a rhythm of withdrawal and return. This, however, Buber believed, could lead to a growth in selfhood, not a monadic selfhood but one held in the openness of relationship. Buber always denied that he was seeing dialogic relations in ideal terms, although Levinas, for example, thinks he ignores the pathos of proximity and duality. Community perhaps was freer from the tension-fraught 'transactions' that dyadic relations can be heir to. At any rate the extent of the diffusion of the notion of I/Thou and of dialogue suggests that Buber's identification of a personal realm distinct from that of objects met a response among those who sought a way out of the positivist alternative no less than among those anxious to find a bridge between man and God through the dimension of personal relations. It is also interesting to note that no less a philosopher than William James anticipated Buber's terminology when he wrote: 'The universe is no longer a mere It to us, but a Thou, if we are religious'[12].

As for what he has to say about speech, Buber is one with Gabriel Marcel in stressing the ontological weight of language. If such a phrase seems opaque one could illustrate the *loss* of the ontological weight of language from Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* where, in a near claustrophobic set, with the orchard visible outside, the family members talk past each other. In contrast to this, the dialogue in Marcel's plays goes beyond mere conversation in a most painful probing of the wounds the characters have inflicted on each other. As dramatist and music critic, Marcel had unique access to the two art forms which most of all present dissonant voices on the move, a working out in sound which may have no resolution. Moreover in both he is alive to the ontological weight of the unsaid, the unvoiced, gaps, rhythms continuing

across pauses, the silence of refusal and the silence of rapport. There is also, in both drama and music, a puzzle about beginnings and endings. Why should the play/musical composition begin here and end there rather than anywhere else. Both Buber and Marcel would bring as an answer to such a question the kind of interpretation they give of apparently chance encounters. The key lies in 'mystery' for both, but not in mysticism. The kind of verbal communication appropriate to mystery Marcel finds in invocation and Buber in addressal, each akin to prayer and very different from the current discourse of multiple narratives beating their wings in empty space.

I have had little to say about religion in these reflections and this may leave unsatisfied those for whom the Divine Being provides a paradigm of personhood. But the theme of the intersubjective seems wide enough. Moreover, as the theist's concept of the Divine sets up an image of a thoroughly non-symmetrical relation with finite persons, it seems to be unhelpful if one is trying to elucidate 'we' unless, following Malebranche, the Divine is seen as a plenum *within* which and because of which/whom finite persons can communicate. The main theme in Buber's best known work is that of *presence* of each to the other, thereby confirming the other, something which is *familiar* in the human world, although so often lacking. Since this is his focus, he starts, not with the relation to God, but with the I/Thou relation which later provides a *simile*, as he tells us himself, for talking about God. The 'turning', of which both A.D. Gordon and Buber speak, is a turning in response and responsibility to the other. Neither could identify with the orthodox of their own community.

Was it not perhaps an advantage to speak of the Centre,[13] of spirit, or as for Marcel, of Being, without necessarily mentioning the name of God? This is fully in consonance with his reference to each religion as an exile into which man has been driven. To erect boundaries between what is religious and what is not, between the holy and the profane, is to try to delimit what in reality is a plenum accessible in many ways, not excluding nature and art, but most of all in human relations. The last sentence of 'Distance and Relation' reads:[14] 'It is from one man to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed'. Passing would not be possible without distance. The 'we' does not require a cancelling of individuality but rather presupposes it.

To conclude, of all writers attempting the difficult task of elucidating the 'we', Buber after all seems able to do what Levinas thinks he cannot do except in the rarefied air of 'spiritual friendship' – reconcile proximity and duality, individuality and community, identifying the subtle textures of horizontal relationships in the homespun fabric of everyday life.

NOTES

1 Henri Arvon, *Ludwig Feuerbach ou la Transformation du sacré*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1957, p.9.

2 *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 1843, pp. 859 and 860.

3 *Cartesian Meditations*, Fr.ed. J.Vrin, 1953, p.iii.

4 I borrow this phrase from Rowan Williams who uses it in another context.

5 Quoted by Nathan Rotenstreich in *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig* (ed.), P. Mendes-Flohr, University Press of New England, Hanover and London, 1988.

6 *Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis*, III, p.221 f.

7 See Afterword to *Das Dialogische Prinzip* written in 1954.

8 Eliezer Schweid, "Prophetic Mysticism" in twentieth century Jewish thought, *Modern Judaism*, 14 (1994), the Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 166. I am also grateful for an opportunity to discuss the relation between the two thinkers with him.

9 "Distance and Relation", first published in English in *The Hibbert Journal*, Vol. XLIX, 1951.

10 Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1955, p.175.

11 *Ibid.*, p.176.

12 *Essays in Pragmatism*, ed. by Alburey Castell, Hafner Publishing Co.New York, 1949, p. 106f. First published as *Pragmatism*, 1907.

13 *Werke*, I, p.156.

14 *The Knowledge of Man*, trs. from the German by Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1965, p.71.

Chapter 3

Speaking of Lifeworlds

It was mentioned in the previous chapter that the analyais of intersubjectivity has tended to be situated in epistemology. This surely leaves any philosopher interested in reflecting about the actual world unsatisfied. André Mercier, formerly of the University of Berne, used to point out wisely that a relation between mere subjects would naturally be highly problematic, for the very word 'subject' entered philosophical discourse as a contrasting term to 'object', and so a relation between one subject and another subject would seem to be hamstrung before it even began. Husserl was particularly alive to this problem, given his theory of constitution, for how could one centre of constituting activity constitute another such centre?

There was another alternative open to Husserl, to bring in the notion of the transcendental, drawing much from Kant, as he did. Here though, another problem raised its head. The transcendental subject, as Kant envisaged it, could not properly be spoken of as either single or plural. What then is Husserl to do with this legacy? This is not the place to detail the very interesting series of stages through which Husserl's thinking on this proceeded from the *Cartesian Meditations* onwards. But even when he appears to have brought back all that was originally bracketed, by the time he writes the *Krisis* he is still, at bottom, loathe to discard the concept of a transcendental onion skin without which we would not have what we in fact do have, that is a world of interacting persons comporting themselves in the ebb and flow of human relations in the midst of cultural and historical components, *et al.*

He speaks frankly about transcendental intersubjectivity, and we have to take it that this is the ground level condition of the possibility of lifeworlds. The analysis is not 'mundane', that is purely descriptively empirical, as it is in Schutz. Finding *transcendental* intersubjectivity as the condition of lifeworlds is subtly different from making lifeworlds the condition of intersubjectivity. Husserl probably looks upon the former as distinctively human, a not exclusively cognitive endowment, but one which does have an indispensable perceptual element. In any case, since Husserl leaves behind the faculty psychology of so many of his predecessors, he sees human beings as open to multiple regions of experience which, when thought through, hinge importantly on our relations with other people. So, in building the 'we' into our awareness *ab initio*, Husserl adopts a strategy which clears him from any charge of solipsism that critics might wish to come up with, and, in his own development as a thinker, confirms his distance from both naturalism and historicism.

Since Kant is a father figure in some of this discussion, albeit in a very implicit way, the canniness of Kant's own solution, if solution it be, needs to be noted. Having given in the first *Kritik* a thorough analysis of what is *allgemeine* or common, he lifts the whole issue of intersubjectivity away

from epistemology and situates it within the purview of practical reason, and it is here that we look for his views on lifeworlds (although this word is not used) and ethics. In the event, this has the great merit of extending the range of ethical concern, although this implication is perhaps not immediately evident. If this hunch holds water, Kant is more relevant to the present day climate of thought than he is usually thought to be. Not to treat others as means has enormous applicability today, extending as this does to the needs of future generations as well as our own, and a no less crucial injunction lies in the imperative not to make an exception of ourselves. Kant's concern with the requirements of peace was likewise future-oriented. For all his interest in the natural world which science investigates in detail and about which ordinary perception sufficiently informs us for our daily needs, Kant is deeply concerned about the social world, conscious as he is of the crooked timber of humanity, and how the odds seem to be stacked against the likelihood of Enlightenment ideals being actualized in his own day. He touches base here, across about half a century, with Butler's misgivings about the power of conscience. Against a Kantian background, the set of considerations from which Husserl proceeds to develop his ideas on lifeworlds strikes us as different. But what were these considerations, and at what point do ethical issues arise in his thinking, if they do at all. Posing such a question opens up many others, and in what follows I shall not do more than try to think about a few.

Husserl's views about the lifeworld changed as the years went by. He starts off by treating it as the 'vulgar' standpoint as Hume would have called it – what has to be suspended, or bracketed, if the phenomenological method is to get under way. The reference to Hume is worth pondering, for Hume understood very well that there was a certain 'artificiality' about what philosophers do, and that, after all, in everyday living, philosophers get on as everyone else does (how fascinated he would have been by the new set of simulacra or images provided by television, sometimes triggering an unwilling suspension of disbelief). For all the quasi artificiality of this stance, what the philosopher reckons to do is to provide insight, of course an insight based on evidence, and which is compatible with theory. The crunch arises in how evidence and theoretical justification are related. What is evidence for one individual may not be such for another. Hume, with his expertise in the writing of history and the procedure of arriving at legal decisions, is very aware of this dilemma. In both these fields, circumstantiality can offer 'adequate' grounds for belief, and in any case that is all we may be able to get.

Avenarius' empiriocriticism allows the phrase *natürliche Weltbegriff*, but this was in the interest of propounding a monistic theory of knowledge. This was strongly criticized by Engels who was deeply interested in vindicating naïve realism as the basis of scientific knowledge. The phrase Avenarius uses can stand side by side with Husserl's *natürliche Umwelt* referred to in *Ideas I* which brings out the 'surrounding' nature of the world, a concept which Jaspers uses in a more metaphysical and trans-empirical sense. What can easily escape notice, if sights are largely set on how Husserl sets up his *epoché*, is the way he never questions the invariant structures of the lifeworld

– its extension in space and time (or space/time), the existence of animals, other people, plant life and the inorganic, and the typical regularities that all these exhibit. Without falling into a reductionist trap, Husserl is struck by geometry among the formal sciences, seeing it as the result of what he calls an 'idealization' from an experience which was pre-geometrical. Any kind of bifurcation thesis, whether epistemological or ontological, leaves a thinker with the tricky problem of relationality.

Hume has already been mentioned in connection with the difference between the 'ordinary' and philosophical standpoints. But Berkeley too deserves mention here on two other grounds, his interesting work on the correlation of sensible spaces which antedates Husserl's fascinating analysis of the multiple constituting activities which are involved even in a 'simple' act of perception, and, secondly, his awareness that interpersonal relations called for something more than 'ideas' in his understanding of that term.

Now if the formal sciences, and inductive inference (who wants to have inferred friends?) are to be kept in their respective spheres, what further resource do we, in fact, have at our command in our commerce with other people? The way the scientific outlook has stressed that the 'real is the measurable' has lead to the neglect of the actual world we live in by all too many philosophers, and has had a further offshoot – the inability of some to distinguish between the natural and human sciences. The target then, is not just to 'save the phenomena' if by this we are just speaking of the sensible world, but to do justice to all the various spheres of human experience; not only to map a *speculum mentis* confined to an 'inner world', but a world within which all that we are heir to is accommodated. Moreover the analysis should have a certain transparency wherein the interconnections between the various spheres can be elucidated.

Such a matrix is what Husserl has in mind in his early thinking about the lifeworld. The differentiation between the various activities and disciplines was carefully noted, including a sense of the difference between what is, could be, might be, and should be. The debt to Kant remains, the clue being ourselves rather than anything external. But Husserl is free from the straitjacket of a fixed set of categories and is anxious to draw attention to the swirling, near fluid nature of experience, wherein lie the springs of creativity, a programme which he shared in many respects with his contemporary William James.

For all the sharpness of his critique of the 'positive sciences' in *Ideas I*, the 'success' of the natural sciences in contrast to the changing stances of psychologists was never far from his mind. He was no less convinced that the *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* were essentially different, for human beings were not things. In this connection he derived an important message from the Gestalt school of thinkers. It was not a message implying relativization but one which stressed how the shifting focus of attention could throw light on the sense of continuity at work in the buzzing blooming caravanserai of experiences. Apparent confusion, in fact, concealed a method of far-reaching importance, and what this was in contained is his treatment of

constitution. Along with this, Husserl set himself the task of analyzing further the puzzle of a universality which accommodates much diversity and, at the same time, sought to get round the risk of relativization which he had struggled to avoid ever since his early reaction to empiricism and historicism.

What Husserl pinpoints, it seems to me, and this is my own way of phrasing it, is the way human experience hinges both on the stance of taking for granted and the ability to entertain possibilities. I have already used the word 'matrix' in connection with the lifeworld in the sense that here we have a plenum on which we can rely – indeed we have none other – and which yet provides the *Spielraum* for infinite surmisings, *Bewusstseinslage*, and practical activities, in fact a whole diapason of *expressions*. When he speaks of *the* lifeworld, that is, in the singular, I believe he refers to this plenum. Put in this way, we seem to have herein a term of high generality, but not in the sense in which *theoretical* concepts in the formal sciences, or even natural sciences, are such.

Could there be a *deep* generality in contrast with high generality, and would this not be much like what 'ground' was taken to be? There is, no doubt, some justification for maintaining that the world of the natural sciences is a universally intersubjective world. What Husserl does is to draw attention to an even more basic and prior universally intersubjective domain on which he believed the world of 'theory' could be said to depend. What he terms apodictically necessary lifeworld structures are 'sunk' in time – and at this point he draws on Kant's Schematism in his own way – and could even be said to be referring to the trans-cultural. Their very indispensability seems to mark them as transcendental, and there is scarcely a doubt that this is what Husserl thought they were. They are laid bare only through heightened focusing on what is embedded, and this shows the manner of their functioning as conditions of the possibility of human existence in a world, or, in Husserl's idiom, conditions of the possibility of 'meanings'.

The overarching *reach* of his programme, its systematic character, can also be appreciated through another route, by setting up a conversation between him and Bertrand Russell. Russell was a very different kind of philosopher indeed, but, it must be remembered that he shared a special interest in both Leibniz and Frege. Central to Russell's tasks, when he is not dealing with the formal sciences, is how to relate what he calls the worlds of physics and sense, *an aporia* which also bothers Husserl. Russell has much to say about the problems of practical life, whether it be personal relations, threats from technology or the danger posed to democracy by ideology. However – and I may be doing him an injustice – he does not integrate these matters, vital as they are to living in the modern world, into his largely epistemological concerns. For this reason, Russell belongs with those thinkers who depend on logic and language as tools of analysis, while Husserl has insights which lead in another direction – plurality of modes of givenness, recognition of the importance of time-consciousness, human corporeality, and the cultural baskets which, to some extent at least, tend to give rise to modes of differentiation of human beings.

If the invariant structures of the lifeworld indicate a certain ground of unity, the notion of plural lifeworlds, each representing a limited intersubjectivity, suggests not radical difference, although at one place in his writings he appears to think that the world which Zulus inhabit is a radically distinctive, but *distinguishable* variation. The extent to which homogenization was gradually taking place was already visible in Husserl's own time, but not in the circles in which he moved. For recognizable difference to foster a welcoming *Gelassenheit* was not something conspicuous in the Germany of his day. Husserl experienced the sharp edge of racism close at hand, and if the primary 'crisis' he writes about concerned the frightening 'objectivism' associated with the scientistic outlook and its extension in technology, an ideology which fanned hatred and substituted myths for values generated no less imminent a crisis, and a cultural degeneration which would lead to the extinction of millions.

To see that there is a cognitive core in all 'meanings', a standpoint to which Merleau-Ponty drew attention in his work on perception, has an implication in the analysis of situations at the community and national levels which can be missed if the focus of inquiry is too narrowly epistemological. I have in mind the obligation to 'know what is going on' which strikes me as a crux in that herein knowing acquires an ethical dimension of a challenging kind. It also points up obstacles to knowing, such as distortion of news items by the media, lack of access to information on account of illiteracy and other forms of deprivation. The sedimented character of both the history of communities and individual persons is formative cumulatively, a 'thick' transcendentality which on occasion becomes visible, at least in part, on the analogy of the visibility of a hitherto hidden stratum in a palimpsest. Dilthey had spoken of the heightened awareness needed by the philosopher, and this was an awareness that Husserl had in full measure, stretching both to the critique of a scientism which, if untamed, set no limit to the realm of objectification, and insight into the developing rift between professions of high culture and the cauldron of forces in society ready to erupt, toppling all pretension, and leading to catastrophe.

Husserl, it seems to me, sees a connection between the 'loss of subjectivity' implied in scientism (Heisenberg and others notwithstanding) and 'aberrations' in the otherwise natural connectivity of lifeworlds. This matter is not unrelated to the difference that there is between two senses of universality – the universal 'validity' of general theory in the natural sciences, and the universality, as he maintains it, of the structures such as space and time, casuality *et al*, operative at the pre-given ground level of the lifeworld. This is an additional area of inquiry to what has already been noticed, the aporia between worlds of physics and worlds of sense, as Russell calls them. Questions of level, language strata and the rest tend to raise dust which obscures vision.

But I wish to pinpoint an even further puzzle. Let us take an almost trivial example. The formula H_2O, that children learn in school, explains what water is. But human beings do not drink H_2O. They drink water. To relate water to life is to see its necessity not only for my existence, but also its necessity

for the existence of others. The point recalls William James' mention of 'cashing' abstractions in terms of familiar sensible data. I believe this example indicates a third sense of universality, the recognition of a commonality of need, if not a commonality of dilemma, something which bears within it the seed of an ethical awareness without which all might perish. Incidentally, current worldwide water shortages are generating something very like this awareness in some policy makers.

Husserl also adds to all this a further commonality thanks to his penetrating analyses of the dimensions of time, namely, the dependence all persons have on heritages, sedimented in the past and present, and endowing current circumstances with a dynamic of possibilities some of which bode well and some ill. The condition of *having* heritages is universal, but the *content* of these is, of course, diverse. Along the way, in other words, Husserl accumulates a number of problems which his critics were not slow to seize upon, the question of relativization, how personal lifeworlds are related to limited intersubjective worlds e.g. communities (with which an individual may find himself in radical disagreement), and, in view of their extensive diversity, whether it makes sense to think in terms of a universal lifeworld, a concept which has been the telos of liberal thinkers ever since the Enlightenment.

I would like to suggest, taking into account evidence to be found in his *Nachlass*, that Husserl was very conscious of the way life histories impinge on each other, affect each other, and that when this is matched by the mutual impacting of 'limited intersubjectivities' we encounter a source of both opportunity and danger. In other words, I bring to bear, more than is usually done, Husserl's own life history, on the stages in his thinking. It would be strange if it were otherwise. His life spanned the first half of the twentieth century in which he had lost a son in Verdun and another had been wounded in the First World War, experienced the effects of mindless nationalism and irrational propaganda, and seen how ideology could bring death and destruction to persecuted communities, eliminating lifeworlds and those who live in them. Moreover the very universal structures mapped by scientists could be exploited by those in power in order to engineer disaster.

Since Husserl's time we are probably more willing to recognize that the fact of plurality of lifeworlds does not *ipso facto* rule out overlap between them, and that macro lifeworlds can develop which *encompass* others without bulldozing their quiddities. Furthermore, relativity to context and circumstance does not involved relativization in any vicious sense. My lifeworld is both individualized and connected with other people's lifeworlds. And since time extends both before and after us, I am connected with the lifeworlds of both earlier and later generations. : 'Generative world constitution extends before me and after me, before us and after us in a community – of generations'[1].

Personal histories show the establishing of connections and their rupture, with imagination and memory entering into a transmission which is constantly crafted afresh. It is striking that Husserl should have said that the disjunctions and aporias in human relations demand a mending which is no

less than an ethical task[2]. Such a position fits into the multiplicity of ways in which constitution takes place, including the consideration that so much has been constituted *for us* in what we experience as 'home' and 'homeworld'. That there can be a *Heimwelt* over time, as Husserl suggests, has an added poignancy in situations where a *Heimwelt* in space has been lost. However, a question might be raised whether anything transcendental remains when the prioritized 'ego' has given way to a 'we' extending through the dimensions of both past and present, and moreover, with a shifting connotation.

To find Husserl's treatment of this puzzle, but not necessarily to agree with it, we need to take seriously his understanding of the *a priori*. The sedimentations of both personal history, and the extensions which are handed down through tradition, amount to a material *a priori*, a partially retrievable endowment which cannot be shuffled off, and which functions as an enabling condition of what is experienced now and in the future. From Husserl's point of view, this is what gives warrant to the use of the term transcendental. Sedimentation might even suggest a passing over of empirical elements into what counts as transcendental endowment. That is as may be. But at least the recognition of the *on-going* nature of the formation of lifeworlds is an important step in our analysis, and, moreover, is something which has ethical implications to be thought through. For example is there not only an obligation to remember[3] but to remember and forgive. I think here of the agonizing situation reflected on in Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower*[4]. Or, reviewing elements in traditional societies, it may be that there is an ethical imperative to remove elements that cripple the lives of a particular section of society, and a no less pressing obligation to preserve other elements of value, such as artifacts, forms of behaviour, texts and so forth.

Given the plurality of lifeworlds, a further intriguing question arises. Does a shared lifeworld invariably have an ethical component? Examples might pull in diverse directions. I am playing in an orchestra and we rehearse on Tuesday evenings. What is produced is the result of joint effort. It is my 'duty' to attend rehearsals if I am to play on the night of the concert. Within that overarching commitment I must not swamp the others with my trombone, play incorrect notes, or push the tempo in such a way as to wreck the performance. Now, if duty is to be understood as contrary to inclination, then the word 'duty' may seem *de trop* in the above example, as I have no inclination whatsoever to wreck the performance by what I do or refrain from doing. Here is another example. The shared world of friends is not underwritten by a sense of obligation. When thanked for an action appreciated, we say 'It's a pleasure' and this is what we *mean*.

Now, without ostensibly talking about ethics, Husserl, it seems to me, does throw light on the above situations, and the clue is to be found in the notion of sedimentation. The 'we' concretized time and again in everyday life already carries with it a fabric of experiences remembered, present now, hoped for, and worked towards, in which others are well and truly involved. While the apparently ego-centred origin of intentional acts and their objectivating function makes Levinas critical of the application of this idea

to interpersonal relationships, he is surely right in taking rueful note of the way in which the absence of mutuality of human relations can snarl up what Landgrebe calls the historical flow of life. What Aron Gurwitsch refers to as the 'ambiguous' nature of consciousness is due not only to its volatility but to the bogs and shallows, *Sturm und Drang*, of our relations with our fellows. Levinas discerns in all this the unmistakable appeal of 'the other', in this way building into the relation between individuals and their lifeworlds the intrinsic appeal of the ethical demand, the requirement of response of a specific kind. It is certainly true that human relations *include* the detritus of failures, betrayals, injuries given and received, wilful indifference and the extreme cases of torture, persecution and extermination.

But we can still look again at the question whether the commerce of lifeworlds *necessarily* involves an ethical component. To the saint it probably does. But what about the following. When we say 'I felt bound to visit him/attend the function' and so forth, we voice an understood implication of a relation already in process, an undertaking the natural outcome of which is the action contemplated. 'Feeling bound to' can also stem from a sheer convention common in a particular society, e.g. sending a gift of sweets during a special festival. I might incur displeasure if I fail to do this, but no *moral* odium would be involved.

The drift of these remarks is not in the direction of seeking to iron out the ethical in favour of a kind of preference, but to *extend* it to a range of experiences where ethical import might easily be ignored. Having qualms, a sense of indignation, 'taking umbrage', or in the loosely phrased contemporary idiom, 'feeling uncomfortable with', are but some out of a range of nuanced experiences which escape the net of classification. The manner in which Husserl extends our sensitivity to the stretch and reach of the experiences available for philosophical reflection is his way of elucidating what being human means. The 'meaning' involves intricacy and complexity, taking into account the bundle of contradictions which human beings are. It is the totality of living – that is the living which has made us what we are – that is revealed when we judge that to hurt X's sentiments by wearing leather sandals in her kitchen might be regarded as a mere enfringement of convention involving no moral turpitude. However, the new bride in certain cultures is no doubt best advised to abide by convention.

Husserl's later writings show much insight into culture as a formative influence in sharing experience, and in the following chapters some of the examples given seek to illustrate this. Once more the extent to which his concept of sedimentation is illustrated thereby cannot escape notice. One further mention is needed while we are on the subject of sedimentation. The wisdom of the body is deeply sedimented. I know I cannot cross the road in time to avoid oncoming traffic, handicapped as I am. It is not just my bodily subjectivity that so informs me, or, on the other hand, a mental act of judgement in which I assess the odds. The sedimented adjustments of the body reflected in the sedimented adjustments of the mind show themselves not so much in judgement as in a total life response, one which, in fact, *saves* life. Ill health, fatigue, and

ageing are not only, as a matter of fact, physically restricting but, in the widest sense are conditions of the *impossibility* of certain kinds of experience. Kant does not use this language, but his correspondence with his friends towards the end of his life gives moving evidence of his sense of failing powers and an impossibility of which neither he nor Leibniz had occasion to write, in Kant's case, because of his lifelong concern with other sorts of limits, limits of reason.

When Simmel speaks of each one as a fragment of his own possibilities this could be taken, dire situations apart, both as a hopeful augury of further fulfillment or relief at deliverance to date from many ills that the flesh is heir to. At any rate, there is an openness about what being human amounts to, seen poignantly in the 'innocence' of the newborn, an openness which poverty and exploitation can not only curtail but *ab initio* foreclose.

We have seen in the foregoing discussion how Husserl takes a firm stand on what he calls transcendental intersubjectivity, which, in his latest writings, seems to be the sedimented outcome of heritage, experience and environment. However, both Alfred Schutz and the existentialists (the approach of each of these otherwise being different), question whether, having left behind the *epoché* and taken into account the sedimentation of experiences over time, we should be talking of transcendentality at all. What Schutz is concerned with, as a sociologist, is what he calls mundane intersubjectivity. The mundane, or *weltlich*, cannot but be in time, whereas the transcendental is not such. It so happens that, as far as time is concerned, Schutz is as much influenced by Bergson as by Husserl. And so, with Schutz, we have the dropping of the language of the transcendental.

In terms of Kant's modalities of possibility, actuality and necessity, Schutz is interested in actuality, that is, with the 'natural'. Our actual everyday world, he says, is an intersubjective cultural world in which each relates to his fellows in varying degrees of intimacy and anonymity. Each organizes his world around his own person; but we share a great deal – work, knowledge and suffering – spelt out in a web of reciprocal, and sometimes non-reciprocal, relations. The base line of our common humanity, Schutz reminds us, is our human birth, an initial ultimate dependence, and fundamental starting point of our 'biographical situation' as he calls it. In a piece of writing which recalls both Hermann Cohen and Husserl's *Nachlass*, he speaks of a social world in which we have associates, contemporaries, predecessors and successors[5]. From this it is clear that, for Schutz, we are four-squarely set in the natural attitude, the very *Fundament* of the social sciences. There is something very down to earth about his examples of subjectivity's grasp of the alter ego in its 'vivid present' – playing a game of tennis, performing chamber music, or making love[6]. Such examples bring out the mediumship of an activity, a mutuality of concern as Max Weber has it. The 'tuning in' relationship (Schutz's language) could not take place between monadic egos, nor would it be facilitated through 'transcendental intersubjectivity'.

A further aspect of Schutz's approach also attracts special attention, his treatment of anonymity. In a very significant passage Schutz says this[7]:

> The outstanding feature of a man's life in the modern world is his conviction that his life-world is neither fully understood by himself nor fully understandable to any of his fellow-men.

This supports his contention that mundane life is a sphere in which we function with plausibilities. There is an echo of William James in some of this[8]. We are obliged to try out what is workable, especially, workable within the constraints of time, the activities of others, and relevance to particular junctures in our 'life-plan'. The life-plan takes into account interests, problems, projects and feasibilities. And, in the greater part of the time we are 'dealing with' those whose names we do not know, or will perhaps never see again. So whatever we may say about the intersubjective nature of our lifeworlds also needs to take in a solitude which is in no way solipsistic nor identical with privacy, but is tied up both with the individualizing psychophysical nature that we possess and, in our own day especially, with the pulverized character of urban living which can make for a sense of homelessness. As far as anonymity is concerned, to enter into highly 'existential' relations with everyone featuring in our day-to-day lifeworld would be overpowering, although in small village, face-to-face communities in the past, this may well have been what it was like. All in all, even a brief, and most surely inadequate mention of some of Schutz's contributions to the lifeworld idea lends weight to Maurice Natanson's comment that 'What Schutz offers us is an architectonic of common sense'[9].

The existentialists[10], among whom there is a great deal of variety, think poorly of transcendental language, on the ground of its deliberate bracketing out of existence. Two influential ethical concepts have been thrown up, 'engagement' and 'authenticity,' the awareness of social realities being more marked among French writers. However, the notion of being-in-the-world, coined in order to rebut Cartesianism, is still some distance from 'having a world'. It does not really reflect sensitivity to the enormous *differences* between lifeworlds, for example, that of rich, poor, disabled, aged, powerful, and marginalized, to mention a few examples.

The stress on choice, moreover (still carried over into much of the discussion among economists), ignores the fact that probably the vast majority of people in many cultures have scarcely any choices. The plight of refugees, mentioned earlier, brings home the condition of thousands, if not millions, of human beings. 'Life-plans', a word featuring in Schutz's work, are either nullified, as when a peasant farmer, already in debt, suffers a series of droughts or other disasters and ends his life[11], or undergoes drastic change through changes of government driven by neo-colonial intervention and/or ideological shift. The fragility of the lifeworlds of so many people is masked by various factors, and among them are these – statistics of 'economic growth' whose purport is to show that everything is hunky-dory, but do not take into account unjust distribution of wealth, wastage of resources in incomplete technologies which have no meliorist outcome, to say nothing of the decima-

tion of environment caused by global warming, preemptive wars, and other matters brought to public notice by pioneering journalists.

The syllabus of ethical issues in today's world includes the need to diagnose why democracy so often succumbs to disruptive forces in society, the analysis of how *dérapage* comes about, and the identification of *loci* of responsibility along with the call for accountability. Technology and international economic processes bring about a host of ethical challenges which cannot be swept under the carpet on the ground of inevitable results of a period of 'transition'. The fascination of generalities, especially generalities provided by statistical surveys, can too often swamp awareness of the particular – the peasant who has seeds and perhaps even fertilizer, but no access to irrigation, the young girl pushed into the flesh trade in the nearest city in order to help destitute parents or sublings.

To wrestle with the connection between lifeworlds and ethics is to engage in *Kulturkritik*, a hard, and perhaps unwelcome message for those whose ethical thinking is driven by theory. In the twenty-first century it is time for the diagnostic eye to be turned on actual states of affairs. *Ideenkleider* cannot be avoided, but, as with the root of this metaphor, clothes can wear out and require changing. The *metabasis* called for is a turn to the concrete, recognition of the ethical challenges inhering in situations which we have come to view as part and parcel of 'nature's everyday performances'. In keeping with this overall strategy, I turn next to the part played by circumstance in constituting our lifeworlds.

NOTES

1 *Husserliana* XV, 199f., 207f.

2 See ch. 8 in my *Hinterlands and Horizons*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Md., 2002.

3 See ch.8 in my *Hinterlands and Horizons*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Md., 2002.

4 Schocken Books, New York, 1998.

5 Alfred Schutz, *Economica*, Vol.IV, 1937, pp. 406-424.

6 Cf. his *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der socialen Welt*, Vienna, 1932, 2nd ed. 1960.

7 *Collected Papers* I, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1962.

8 See especially William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol.2, New York.

9 Maurice Natanson, *Anonymity*, a study in the philosophy of Alfred Schutz, Indiana University Press, Blomington, 1966, p.44.

10 See my *The existentialist outlook*, Orient Longman Ltd., Delhi, 1973.

11 As in Andhra Pradesh, India, at the time of writing.

Chapter 4

Towards a Phenomenology of Circumstance

There is no doubt that, even outside those styles of philosophizing which frankly depend on mathematical concepts, many key metaphors used by philosophers and/or models implicit in their thinking come from mathematics. The whole notion of linear argument as a continuous process is that of the path of a moving 'point' where the point is the theme, the nerve of the argument. Aristotle, by no means as ostensibly Pythagorean a thinker as Plato, yet operates with a pyramidical metaphysic of being whose governing image seems to be the triangle. Philosophies which set their targets on infinity, not ununderstandably, often had a rather different lineage, for parallel lines, recurring decimals and the like provide linear models which fall short of the on-all-sides boundedlessness which the word 'infinite' conjures up in the imagination.

Although some circles have been regarded as vicious and others as teasing (the hermeneutic circle), the circle has on the whole been an object of fascination for philosophers, Pythagoras being among their number, and finds its place in magical and mystic cults, as well. In Shaktism, incidentally, one could say, stretching a point perhaps, that linearity (*nāḍī*) and centrality (*cakra*) are combined. Tantric ritual practices provide multiple variations on the circle theme, all of which fall outside the scope of this study. The closed figure exerts a certain attraction, whether it be the triangle or the circle. The circle, moreover, fascinates because of its centre. Who or what is at the centre? The prospect of being able to penetrate to the core, to bounce off the rim, go outside the orbit, both fascinates and frightens at the same time. In an earlier age the infinite spaces were occasions of fright for Pascal. In the twentieth century they have become fields of actual exploration, and their imaginary denizens provide the *dramatis personae* for cartoon strips. As far as coteries are concerned, it may not always be an unmixed blessing to be numbered among those of the inner circle. The wheel has turned full circle – another image belonging to the same family and to which we shall return anon. Bergson was really the first philosopher to treat the *open* fearlessly. But even he still uses linear metaphors to do so. His rocket is a linear arrowhead flying upwards and dissolving in a thousand stars.

Primitive man was confronted, no doubt, by a host of enemies. But he was no less beset by a sense of being surrounded. The various inimical powers in the forest or in the desert, the chaos that lies beyond the isles, the icy wastes of the poles – out of such contexts the images of heroic figures are born. But not all can be heroes. Hence the need for the magic circle within which safety lies (in the *maṇḍala* idea the efficacy depends on appropriate *mantras*, as well), the ring which proclaims faithfulness amidst betrayal, the sure rim beyond which one may not (or *cannot*) venture. All this shows what a rich primeval experience there is behind our sense of the surrounding, all the more

poignant since we have lost belief in the obliquely comforting surrogates, and the Fates, the Furies, demons and devils on whom adversity can be blamed. The surrounding is a barricade which protects, a thicket which ensnares, an enveloping fog which blinds vision, a hurdle over which the adventurous may wish to leap. It can also be a source of excuses.

It is the 'circular' set of metaphors which gives the feel of repetition. The repetition may be comforting or otherwise. Generations in the Indian sub-continent thought of the wheel of births and deaths as inevitable, and yet freedom from this was devoutly to be desired. An agricultural people find the cycle of seasons a reassuring framework for activity. What is fearsome is when the cycle is disturbed, e.g. when the rains fail, or any phenomenon which occurs normally with never-failing regularity, suddenly ceases to do so.

Of all metaphors to do with the circle, at both the folk and the philosophical level, in India it is the wheel which has the richest resonances. Modern Indian languages contain phrases such as 'the wheel of events', 'being caught up in a wheel or round' and the like. Two other phenomena which are part and parcel of the lifeworld of the villager, the oil-press and the grindstone, provide further examples of the humdrum, inevitable, and yet meaningful, round and common task. Like the blindfold bullock treading wearily round the press, we are caught up in the daily 'round' of *vyavahārika* (behavioural) activities. The village woman will say she has been 'at the *chakki* (mill) all day', not literally, although this no doubt will have been part of the day's work. But she has been circumscribed by the duties which fall to her lot. She has had no time for anything else.

The net provides another root-metaphor. 'I am caught up in a net'. Here there is both the sense of being enmeshed and *contained* (for quite a few nets have a round or roundish frame). The word 'chakkar' is used in common parlance in contexts of having to make several visits to get a job done (say, in government offices), being in a fix of some kind or other, having a look round on the off chance of finding a breakthrough (perhaps the officer will actually be 'in his seat'). Even the *parivrājaka* (wanderer or pilgrim), a model of the free man in a certain sense, does not proceed on his wanderings as a man does who sets out to reach a fixed destination, that is, straight. He goes roundabout, again a meaningful activity, given his liberation from the usual caste duties enjoined on the rest of society. I mention all this since, even though the rather insipid words of 'condition' and 'situation' (coupled with adjectives like 'good' and 'bad') seem to serve in most Indian languages for the word 'circumstance' which is found in various European languages, Indian lifeworlds *do* contain both behaviourally and verbally the sort of thing I shall be seeking to elucidate in what follows – circumstance as the peculiarly personal perspective in the guise of which both nature and social reality appear.

We switch next to explore a cue from literature. The great Victorian novelist George Eliot, who had translated both Feuerbach and Spinoza, lived boldly in her personal pursuit of happiness and her creativity was abundantly expressed in her total corpus of writings. She used two phrases which suggest

a take-off point for reflection. In *Middlemarch*, probably the most 'metaphysical' of her novels, the following passage occurs:

> And it seemed to him as if he were beholding in a magic panorama a future where he himself was sliding into the pleasureless yielding to the small solicitations of circumstance, which is a commoner history of perdition than any single momentous bargain.

Elsewhere she refers to the *density* of circumstance. It was perhaps not only because of the restrictions and constrictions of Victorian life that both George Eliot and Thomas Hardy show such deep awareness of the drag, the clogging effect, of circumstance. George Eliot had pondered long and hard over the dilemma posed in Kant's Third Antinomy. The novelist, whose arts deals with the ways of men, is conscious not so much of the mechanical succession of events as of the density of their structure. The relevant image is that of a surrounding plenum, even an undergrowth through which one can scarcely find a path. The path in fact has to be *made*. To be swallowed up in the minutiae of everyday living, and these include the small solicitations of circumstance – is to be condemned, she suggests. To give up, to slide in the direction dictated by circumstance, to succumb, is indeed pleasureless, as all defeats are. The literary writer, particularly the novelist, concerned as he or she is with the *narrative* of living, is often able to hit upon an expression more felicitous than any used by so-called professional philosophers.

The surrounding circumstances, not the philosopher's aseptic 'facts', which environ living and set the stage for decision, can solicit in many ways. Events can invite, challenge or beguile those on whom they impinge. The impact of these solicitations is always very marked on those who see their role in the world of affairs as meliorist, again a word used by George Eliot. The meliorist camp includes both those who see salvation in gradualism (the liberal approach) and those who see no alternative to a definitive rupture with given structures in society (the revolutionary approach). If in addition to this openness, I would even say vulnerability, the agent (for he or she is this, and not a mere observer) is also alive to the poignant beauty of what strikes him as significant detail, we have in him, I believe, one on whom the complexity of twenty-first century living imposes a characteristically heavy burden. And now we move beyond the range of the circumstances with which the characters in George Eliot's novels had to contend and return to the more strictly phenomenological analysis of our theme.

It is in the context of circumstance that we engage in problems that are *practical* rather than theoretical, and the practical enlists the manifold heights and depths of emotion too. It is circumstance which shakes us from the limit point of the observer. We are affected. We can no longer remain indifferent. To be circumstanced is not to be like an object in space. The very word circumstance evokes a model other than that of subject vis-à-vis a *Gegenstand*. We are 'surrounded'. This is expressed by 'um' in 'Umwelt'. The word *Raum*

also has this 'feel' – a lived space which surrounds. Circumstances are to be contrasted not only with the confrontation model of subject and object (incidentally this model is a philosopher's darling and radically different from a laboratory situation) and no less with the linear model of the process idea. Overtones from geometry are still there – the centre of the circle. But the centre is not a point. Even if we say the individual is at the centre, it is not the individual in isolation but the individual-in-relationship. The circular metaphor ceases to dictate. The rim is not a boundary. The periphery may expand in a frightening manner. The whirlpool is the appropriate image for the situation which sucks us down. In one of Sartre's novels, 'mud' is used as a metaphor, the clogging factor which holds back the pedestrian, and so Boueville is the place of stifling situations[1]. Or one can take analogies from rivers and seas. The swimmer can be caught in undercurrents (how true of tangles in institutional life), tangled up in weeds and so forth. One can be 'fenced in' by the actions of another[2].

To be circumstanced is to be situated historically. At one extreme it is to be enveloped, not only trapped in a particular network, but caught in a generalized adversity, to be beleagured. From circumstance springs curiosity, interest, threat and possibility. Circumstance both binds us to the totality of experiencing beings and yet demarcates us from them. For example, the candidate who arrives too late for the interview, the man who cancels his ticket at the last moment for a train which crashes, will each view circumstance differently. For the former it was a misfortune, and for the other, circumstance turned out to be a blessing. It is very odd that the very binding aspect of circumstance often makes us link it with chance. This paradox is elucidated if we think of circumstance as something which may strike us as both contingent and cut free from desert. 'It so happened that ..., this is how it was ...'

To contend with circumstances we certainly need to understand the structure of the situation that besets us. Circumstances always situate us some way or other in intersubjective relations and here, of course, comes the crunch. Cooperation is a major factor which disperses density in favour of transparency. When we say 'circumstances were against him' this is often shorthand for referring to an intractable network of intersubjective hang-ups. It is almost impossible to say anything general about these intractable networks because it is of their essence that each is uniquely different from the rest. A distinction might be ventured between the turgidity of such networks and what was referred to earlier as density. The turgid structure in intersubjective relation is analogous to stagnation in the field of economics and indifference in the field of politics. It bears the sense of 'Nothing's happening'; 'I can't get things moving'.

The density type, however, carries the sense of hostile powers at work, sometimes identifiable, sometimes not. The individual caught in a dense network of circumstances experiences a sense of helplessness and frustration. All seems of no avail, not because, as in the case of turgidity, nobody bothers, e.g. the files are lost, or do not move, the official concerned is not in his seat, but because there seems to be a conspiracy to baulk the individual at every

turn. In a certain type of situation, things have gone so far that his 'intentions' are blocked irrevocably. If we compare turgidity to a stagnating economy we can liken the situation just mentioned to a galloping price economy where all control seems to have disappeared. Both turgidity and density are, in Indian terms, *tāmasika*, but density may have a slight edge over turgidity as far as suffering-potential is concerned.

Yet a lot depends, no doubt, on how circumstances are 'taken'. So far, we have thought of circumstance as battering us as the sea batters the grounded hulk of a ship. But is not circumstance often a sea which supports us, and which, for all its deeps and leviathans, is precisely that medium which keeps our frail bark afloat? We often say, 'He took it very well'. But this language is rather misleading, for it is not that attitude can serve, if such be our temperament, to sugar the irrevocability of much that happens to us, but rather that the concept of circumstance is girt about with attitudinal frameworks (cf. the way 'fact' is girt about with categorial frameworks). These attitudes include ideological stances. But the latter do not exhaust them, for at the back of ideological stances lie non-verbalized sources in the psyche. Although the social scientist may try to trace the contours of these sources (a task which is the special concern of the psychologist), we never touch more than the tip of the iceberg. The basic stances of each individual lie deep in his personal history.

Circumstance can also be seen as a kind of knot which is made up of imponderables. The imponderables include sudden factors (making us remember that all the matters we are considering are cast in the temporal mode) which alter the weightage of elements, e.g. a new boss, a new alignment of political forces, one's own breakdown in health or the illness of someone else. Hinterland and context[3] set the scene for self-expression. The imponderables are 'set' within these. They are the coordinates, the lineaments of enabling determination and of boundary.

Another feature we have not mentioned so far is the sense of being betwixt and between that being in 'adverse circumstances' gives the individual. This again ties in with the 'being in a net', 'being caught up in' which we noticed earlier. To pin down exactly where the intractable elements lie can, but need not, serve to show the way to a breakthrough. Those organizing escape from a prison camp may discover that bribing a particular guard is the key to changing the situation. But a great deal of the horror of adverse circumstances lies in their anonymity, the faceless authorities, for example, with which one may have to contend.

But what of favourable circumstances? It provides wry comment on our human condition to reflect that this phrase is so often used to underplay the achievement attained by another. 'His circumstances were favourable and so he was able to accomplish *X*'. It is strange, indeed, that human beings are often reluctant to give credit where credit may be due and to attribute success to factors belonging to the milieu. The crudest example of common reference to favourable circumstance is where we speak of 'affluent circumstances'. Not that such circumstances need be a spur to endeavour. What makes cir-

cumstances favourable lies elsewhere. It is the way that *possibilities* are built into circumstances that provides the ground for *intervention*, and that gives occasion for us to regard a particular set of circumstances as favourable or otherwise. But to say this pushes the analysis into the court of the very idea of possibility. Even at first glance it seems clear that possibilities are lodged in a nexus which lies at the crossroads of many networks, all of which involve in some way or other what other people are doing and intend to do. What is an option or genuine possibility for me need not be such for you. Stuart Hampshire once remarked that social change ensures that circumstances are always new. While this follows logically from the premise that conditions in society are never static, the real crunch is seen more poignantly in the life of the individual. In personal life it may be just the opposite; circumstances may be as recalcitrant as ever. The French adage '*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*' has the weight of generations of experience behind it.

We need to find an ontological foundation which will make feasible and reasonable the possibility of intervention in the teeth of circumstance, given that the main hazard we face in embarking on praxis is not the unintelligibility of circumstance but its intransigency. To begin with, the notion of circumstance provides us with new and strong evidence for rejecting the bifurcation of nature. The latter thesis has been under fire from several quarters for many years, and in each case it has been found that the cast-iron boundaries set up by the Cartesian position fall down like a house of cards. What lingers is a kind of smog for which quantitative thinking is largely responsible. The intense selectivity of the latter, the simplification which it involves, singularly ill-suits it for investigating human phenomena. We have only to counterpose the concepts of event and circumstance to be aware of a radical qualitative difference between them. Unless this is conceded we can proceed no further in our analysis. It is not for nothing that Husserl saw the crisis of our times as rooted in the dangerous assumption made by the positive sciences and extending from them into other disciplines as well, that the Galilean approach provided a key which could unlock all doors. The positive sciences cannot accommodate the human phenomenon of circumstance. All that we would like to include under the latter will be classified by them under variables whose weightage can be computed objectively, but whose import in human terms slips through the net of numbers.

However, there is a discipline which is very concerned, indeed, with circumstance and which we have so far only mentioned in passing. I refer to history. Historians who plot the operations of forces, those who peer through ideological spectacles and those who have an eye for minute imponderables, to take a scatter – all alike are challenged by the quirky role played by circumstances in the affairs of men. Nothing brings this out more vividly and catastrophically in recent times than the surd element provided by the pathological assassin whose very role is shaped and enabled by circumstance and who, ironically, in his own person embodies circumstance for his victim. The assassin's act sets up a cluster of reactions which in their turn provide the circumstances which, for example, can influence an election, remove certain

people from the scene, alter the balance of forces on the economic front and so on. The assassin is the focal point, the centre, of his own act, but the consequences ripple out and overlap with other sets of rippling foci (if the tension between the two images can be pardoned). The historian tries to understand and interpret the interlocking networks set up by different sets of circumstances. Social phenomena are very evidently not a mere agglomerative set of personal frameworks of circumstance. The interaction is the thing. The historian (in order to limit the inquiry, I mention only a single representative of the social sciences), for all the *Ideenkleider* that he perforce dons, still claims a certain objectivity for his findings, an objectivity which is of course significantly different from that of the natural scientist, but which yet claims to possess a certain freedom from bias. Whether a historian of one school regards a historian from a rival camp as being free of bias or not is a very different question.

But the single person, to whose fortunes we now return, cannot be neutral *vis-à-vis* circumstance, for the essence of circumstances is their relation to the focal centre, the person whose circumstances they are. The whole idea of circumstance would not have arisen had not meanings and facts impinged on each other. Now this impinging is something which is *ipso facto* barred from the viewpoint of the observer. It opens itself up only to the one who is involved. It is precisely the friction of personal 'intentions' with the status quo, which is of course not as static as the words suggest, which sets in motion the net (the *jāl*) of circumstance. To the extent that this is true, no two people inhabit the same lifeworld, something which, in the realm of the positive sciences, was seen by Adler, the psychologist, long ago.

It is in the light of personal intentions, which belong to overall lifeplans, that circumstances appear as favourable or unfavourable. The favourable set of circumstances is still girt about with many imponderables, and these are distinct from the unknown quantities of the positive sciences in their direct impact on ourselves. Imagine, say, a patient who has been admitted to a hospital where the best facilities for his malady are known to exist. A hundred and one unforeseen factors may bring it about that his admission there was to no avail, e.g. failure of X-ray facilities, of water or electricity supply, an accident involving the specialist who was to have done the operation, absence of a vital drug on the market, a lightning strike affecting doctors and nurses. The temporal factor may briefly be noted here. What appears to be a favourable cluster at time t_1, say a set of experts believed to favour a particular candidate, is negatived at the last moment by hostile agencies which determine that the candidate shall be out of those running for the job. These examples bring out, not only the cruciality of the temporal factor, but the far-reaching nature of the relevancies that may be called into play, and likewise, how distinctive the criteria are which determine relevancy in the human sphere *vis-à-vis* those with which we operate in isolating systems in our investigation of nature.

The horizons which circumstances have are infinitely various precisely because of the complexity of the horizons which fan out as it were from each individual (and we should properly include groups too) involved in the

case, the multiple sets of circumstances connected with all their life-plans, plus the interactions set in motion by the joint operation of all of these. It is not possible to foresee, still less to control, what others will do. New factors can at any time enter into the situation. But it is precisely this looseness of texture, the cracks or fissures in what may seem to be an inexorable net, that provide opportunity. It is here that we need to recognize the factors governing manipulability in human affairs, factors very different, indeed, from those of inertia, impact and resultant velocity. Modern life has added many new factors to those with which our ancestors contended, things like contacts, party support, institutional procedures and the like. It is these which fortify our impression that the cluster of circumstances is, of all things, very unlike a grid. Also contributing to the non-grid-like structure of circumstances is the fact that the latter include what has been left undone. It is so often these *gaps* that mark the difference between favourable and unfavourable circumstances. The examples may work either way. The fact that *X* has not been able to speak to *Y* (given that he would have exerted a hostile influence) goes in *A*'s favour at the interview. The fact that *P* has not been able to speak to *Q* (he would have been in the candidate's favour if certain facts had been in his possession) works against *R*'s favour. In all such cases we usually say: 'It was all a matter of luck'. The popular mind, as we noticed earlier, tends to associate circumstances with chance. Reference to chance by human beings has always stemmed from a sense of the random element in human affairs.

Once we try to unravel why things happened as they did, the structure of circumstance shows its extraordinary complexity. Three brothers buy plots of land in an undeveloped area, having heard that a new district is to come into existence in the near future, and the district headquarters is to be situated very near the plots. For a variety of political and economic reasons the move does not take place. The investment proves to be a white elephant, for the land does not even have any resale value. The set of circumstances is more densely structured than what happens to the agriculturalist whose crops fail thanks to a poor monsoon, but no less catastrophic. Both examples situate circumstance firmly in the world of nature and the human world alike.

When all is said and done, what a man does in the face of circumstance, and we are always in *some* set of circumstances, can induce a certain Stoicism. Common speech also includes phrases like 'rising above circumstance', 'refusing to give in to circumstance' and the like. The extent to which an individual is *able* to do this depends on resources which lie in personal history and which may very likely be obscure to the agent himself. And here the observer may have an advantage. The biographer, for example, is able to detect turning-point situations where basic attitudes were formed, flaws and strengths developed which in later life influence how circumstances are 'taken'. The historian and biographer are also often able to look at the objectified results of intersubjective operations 'cut free' from the nodal points of individual 'intentions'. Those who talk in terms of 'social forces' are most likely to follow this strategy. How they see things is very obviously different from how the agent sees them.

Looking back, sometimes a strange pattern emerges even in a sequence of events which are on the whole set in a tragic mould. Just as there is no explanation for *suffering* in the final analysis, so also there is none for circumstance. To find a certain meaning, often catastrophic, or at least laden with sad commentary, in the affairs of men, is not to find an explanation for the same. Even such a sketchy preliminary analysis as this shows that the friction of meanings and facts is essential to the phenomenology of circumstance. The way is made smoother for an understanding of this friction of meaning and fact if the latter itself is better understood. We tend to look on fact as the terminus of inquiry instead of seeing it as the matrix of problems and questions. But, if we grant the latter way of regarding fact as valid, then we go on to discover many interesting overlappings among elements we usually tend to keep apart. Among these the overlap of personal and social (group or national) history – take the example of a man whose education was interrupted by a period of jail-going during a national movement and never completed later because of family obligations – is of special import. But, even the path we have so far covered shows, not that man is the plaything of chance, nor that he is some kind of game-strategist or rule-follower, but that the circumference of events in which he plays the central role, for we speak of his personal history, is an expanding one. The 'circular' imagery with which we began and with which I tried to tie up, however loosely, the notion of circumstance, has philosophical resonances in that all such imagery expresses insights about the human condition.

In this brief study we have come full circle and confirmed the insights which centuries of experience in diverse cultures have left sedimented in our everyday language. Tangential though many of the happenings may seem to be that impinge on a man's existence (and we have definitely left the realm of geometrical possibility here), in terms of his lifeworld it is he who gives them meaning. Naturally meaning-bestowing activities take place in an intersubjective world. In what may seem to be a world of sullen facts it is, after all, human activity which gives them meaning. Amidst the smoke of circumstance ever burns the steady flame of human freedom and dignity. The human person is the centre of gravity even when circumstances do their worst.

NOTES

1 Cf. the unceasing presence of mud in Erckmann-Chatrian's brilliant novel of French peasant life, *La Vie d'un Paysan*, or the squelching of mud familiar to the Indian village boy during the monsoon.

2 Cf. the theme of a popular song of Second World War vintage.

3 See my *Our Knowledge of Other Selves* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963).

Chapter 5

The Concept of Dharma

The concept of *dharma* (roughly translated as 'righteousness') is one of the most challenging in Indian philosophical thought. It seems to cut across so many conceptual distinctions – legal, social, moral, religious – that to those attaching importance to these divides it may appear to be less challenging than confusing. And yet there is something fascinating about a term whose usage spans millennia and which gives evidence of a sustained effort to come to grips with the friction of fact and meaning, institution and ideal. To this day, to say that a man is *dhārmik* (righteous) indicates the highest commendation. Whether one ought to be *dhārmik* or not is something which could be paralleled by whether one should be moral or not. In both cases, to pose the query is to reveal that the speaker has asked a question which does not strictly make sense.

The vast period of time over which the concept of dharma developed needs to be recalled. The early Vedic period dates from around 1500 B.C. when the Aryans invaded India from the northwest and settled in the plains of Punjab. The *Rig-Veda*, consisting of hymns in praise of the gods, might have been composed around 1200-1000 B.C. This is the period when the concept of *ṛta* (cosmic order) was born. *Ṛta* is both the law of righteousness and of cosmic equilibrium and combines in itself the notion of an integrated whole in which gods, men and nature participate. The whole thing was kept going by an intricate web of religious ceremonial which centred on various sacrifices to be made. The Vedas, whose message was believed to have been revealed to rishis or seers, were followed by elaborations called *Brāhmanas*, *Āranyakas*, and *Upanishads*. Their contents range from instructions as to how sacrifices should be performed to meditative works which are philosophico-poetic in nature. *Śruti* (what was heard and *smṛti* (what was remembered) were regarded as *sanātana dharma* (eternal law) and passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth.

The concept of *dharma* evolved out of *ṛta* and encapsulated the basic meanings of the latter – a proper course of which the natural powers of sun, earth, the seasons, etc. were exemplars (cf. "the *dharma* of water is to flow"), parallelism between the functional distinctions among the deities and their counterparts in society, and the role of both human and gods in preserving the balance of parts of all that is. That human beings live in families, clans and other settled communities, that land and cattle have to be tended, and that what people do makes a difference to how things are, are all perceived as of the very nature of existence, but as nonetheless matters which are accompanied by certain ingrained responsibilities. The intermeshing of the natural and the normative is taken for granted. Maybe an agricultural people is well situated to grasp this. Etymologically the root *dhṛ* means 'to hold, have or maintain'. *Dharma* is an ontological principle, but is no less regulative.

From about the sixth century B.C. to the twelfth century A.D. the literature concerning *dharma* proliferated into law books, the epic works *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*, the mythology of the *Puranas*, and eventually the political thinking of the modern era. The ethico-religious concepts of a traditional hierarchical society understandably concerned themselves in large part with relations of values and institutions rather than with personality, based, as the latter is, on a principle of individuality. *Dharma* is a social concept. It did not function in isolation but along with *artha (wealth) and kāma* (desire), the three known jointly as the *Trivarga* (three-fold principles). Whatever brief later speculative thinkers came to hold in favour of *moksha* (liberation) or *apavarga* (a principle beyond the *Trivarga*) it was the threefold values of *artha*, *kāma*, and *dharma* which governed the lives of the majority. Early Indian thinking was frankly this-worldly and concerned with practical matters having to do with the pursuit of prosperity (a matter which, after all, the rest of us do think of when the New Year comes round). Meditative philosophic thought added what has been called the "*atman*-centric predicament"[1] (*atman* meaning noumenal self), the idea that there is not merely an attunement between the self and ultimate reality but, as the Advaita Vedantins would say, an identity between them. To bring in the concept of *moksha* (liberation) is to claim that man has a trans-social destiny which, while not cancelling out *dharma*, takes a man beyond it. This raises the whole question of the relation of the so-called *puruṣārthas* (goals of man) to each other, and to this we must now turn.

In Hindu thought four goals of life-values are spoken of, the three values that make up *Trivarga*, plus *moksha*, which is of later origin. The definition of the first, *artha*, is given by Vatsyayana as follows:

> *Artha* is the acquisition of arts, land, gold, cattle, wealth... and friends. It is also the protection of what is acquired, and the increase of what is protected.[2]

The arts referred to here are those of politics, commerce, techniques of survival and so on. The connotation of *artha* indicates what people in ancient India associated with prosperity. It includes the degree of independence involved in economic well-being and the ability to protect oneself. It is the realm of 'having' where this is regarded as the legitimate base for all other activities. To have land and cattle, but no friends, is to be poor indeed. Ritual activities were largely concerned with this dimension of life, and we find in fact a dual criterion of legitimation offered as far as *artha* is concerned, the religious and the pragmatic. The notion that wealth was 'profane' would have been quite unintelligible to the ancient Hindu. An interesting gloss on the legitimacy of worldly pursuits was provided by Jnanadeva, the saint from Maharashtra, who asked a religious aspirant how he could attain *moksha* if he could not succeed in a lesser task, namely, looking after himself and his family.

The pursuit of *kāma*, or the satisfaction of desire, is no less appropriate than the pursuit of *artha*. Vatsyayana wrote the *Kāma Sūtra* around A.D. 400, and it is clear that he thinks of desire in an extended way:

> *Kāma* is the enjoyment of appropriate objects by the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling assisted by the mind together with the soul.[3]

To say that *kāma* concerns the erotic is to recognize its involvement with the fine arts.

But as soon as we use the word 'appropriate' in the context of both the acquisition of wealth and the satisfaction of desire (in their extended connotations), the need for a regulative principle becomes apparent and this is where *dharma* comes in. Although much of the literature on *dharma* suggests a rather frigid canonical model of precepts which must not be infringed upon, there is another side to the story, the one which legitimates what we in fact value, while recognizing the need for a principle of regulation. *Dharma* is the third of the *puruṣārthas*, and *vis-à-vis* the first two, appears in the form of moral law. This is where the plot thickens, for *dharma* is not a monolithic concept but differentiates itself into the sorts of *dharmas* to be followed over the lifetime of man.

The various *dharmas* are classified into *sādhāraṇa-dharmas* (literally 'ordinary' *dharmas*, or those obligatory on all), *varṇa-dharmas* (those varying with one's station in life) and *aśrama-dharmas* (those varying with stages in life). Manu, about whose dates there is much disagreement among scholars, summarizes the ordinary or general *dharmas* as harmlessness, truth, integrity, purity and control of the senses, these being rough translations of the original terms. *Varna-dharma* was in ancient times identified with caste duties, the original idea behind this being much the same as the principle of 'my station and its duties'. The implication is that, general duties apart, many obligations vary in relation to one's function in society. The duty of the teacher, for example, differs from that of the soldier. The kind of crisis that Arjuna faces in the *Bhagavad Gītā* illustrates the clash of the general duty of harmlessness or nonviolence and the caste duty of the *kshatriya* (member of the warrior caste), namely to fight. The problem of the conflict of duties remains as baffling as it does in any other system of thought, except that Indian reflection adds the injunction to examine one's true nature and proper course of action in keeping with one's true nature and to discover an overriding consideration therein.

The message of the epic literature, however, might well be taken to be something like this. No matter how sincere the effort may be to do the best in the circumstances, there is a momentum in events and a destiny which shapes our ends and which leaves behind much that is disastrous. It is in order to set up a kind of protective barrier against this that the ancient Hindus laid such stress on equilibrium in society. The chaos that they envisaged was not of the cosmic kind that Greek imagination conjured up, but the nightmare possibility of a society where anything goes. It is almost as if they had glimpsed

in idea the cut-throat style of living of a competitive society and opted for a stratified society in which each man had his allotted place. The factual and the prescriptive are mutually involved in an interesting way on such a model. Diversities of function are factual matters and out of these a set of obligations arises. There is also, along with such a view, the belief that traditional roles should be perpetuated on the ground that it is good to do what one can do best. Modern thinking would at this point come up with a query as to the role of judgement in all this. Are prescriptions to be read off, as it were, from roles? We need, I feel sure, to bear in mind the context of a traditional society whose economic life centered on crafts which, for centuries (and this used to be the case in many parts of the world) were perfected through skills handed down from father to son. Radical questioning and self-searching held full sway in a different context, that of metaphysical thought. At the everyday level, fact and evaluation remained bound together in Hindu ethical thinking through appreciation of the components of situation and circumstance.

This comment can be further borne out with reference to the third type of *dharma*, that which varies with stages in life. The four *aśramas* (stages of life) are described as *brahmacarya, gārhasthya, vanaprastha* and *sannyāsa*. The first (student life) is typified in the life of preparation and self-discipline. The full connotation goes beyond the narrower meaning of continence. The second or householder stage is where the facticity of the pursuit of *artha* and *kāma* comes into full play. The *dharma* of the householder also sets a value on links with the past in various ways, ceremonies for the benefit of ancestors, perpetuation of family lines, and the following of the teachings of saints and sages. The householder, situated in the present as he is, is bound by invisible but strong cords to the past and the future. These are the facts of his being-where-he-is. His recognition of this as good, and as indicating his role at this particular stage in life, bears him up in this, the busiest, part of his pilgrimage.

The third stage, *vanaprastha*, retreat to the forest, is analogous to what we mean today by retirement, and significantly, in industrialized societies it often takes the form of a shift from the city to the country. The difference is that whereas in our day we think of retirement as a time for new activities, especially new forms of sociality, the ancient Hindu thought in terms of gradual withdrawal from society, assimilating, as he did, societal bonds to 'bondage'. The texts go into detail concerning change of diet and habits at this stage, much of which makes good sense. It is also worth remembering that Indian philosophy tends to blur the distinction between means and end, so that, to take an example, fasting is looked on both as instrumental to health and self-purification and as discipline as an end in itself. The retired man, free of familial obligations, is still within society and has obligations towards it. The *Rāmāyana* tells how Sita was looked after by Valmiki in his hermitage when she was alone in the forest. But since each stage can be regarded as a preparation for the next the forest-dweller's stage gives way to that of *sannyāsa* or complete renunciation. The ascetic is free of all possessions and also free from the practice of rituals. He has shed all attachment. While from

one point of view the *sannyāsin* (the one practising *sannyāsa*) has gone beyond the bounds of society, from another point of view a societal system that sanctions *sannyāsa* is in fact making room, almost as a safety valve, for those who serve society best by 'being a friend to all'.

The discipline of the four stages is a discipline of growth, of progressive non-attachment. Even the householder, who may be supposed to be attached to his family and his possessions, needs to learn that the time will soon come when all these will have to be given up. The value put on detachment in the Indian tradition can also be seen as a determination not to be submerged by fact. Facticity was usually seen by Indian thinkers above all in the prevalence of suffering in the human condition. Buddha began his meditation on the condition of man with what suddenly struck him as most crucial about this condition – the inevitability of the facts of old age, sickness and death. Was it out of a rare courage or forgetfulness that longevity was nevertheless regarded as good? Death was never regarded as a bourn from which no traveller returned, for the soul would return again and again until all potencies had been worked out. The longer the life the more the opportunity to fulfill positive *karmas* and the less need for too many rebirths – such may be the implicit motive behind this way of thinking. To phrase it like this is to see how the four *aśramas* are connected with the fourth *puruṣārtha*, *moksha*, to which we turn next.

If *dharma* means righteousness, *moksha* is usually translated as freedom or liberation. It might be useful at this point to compare the four *puruṣārthas* with Plato's distinction between *eikasis, pistis, dianoia* and *noesis*. Plato's is a noetic ladder of ascent where, so the Divided Line analogy tells us, there is a coherence between the first and the second and between the third and the fourth. The first two deal with the sensible world and the latter two with the intelligible world. Plato is very clear on the point that there is no route to *noesis* other than through *dianoia*.

Comparison with the *puruṣārthas* is suggestive. The bottom two are worldly. There is no route to the fourth other than via the third. But the progression is not a cognitive one. Moreover the highest term is not spoken of in terms of the good but rather incorporates the insight that freedom from the bondage of suffering is at first sight the highest state to which a human being can aspire. The metaphor of ascent in Plato is here paralleled by the metaphor of a journey within. Phenomenologically, no doubt, the triad of truth, beauty and goodness is not the same as the triad *satcitānanda* (truth, beauty and bliss). Both express in different ways how the ultimate was conceived by two remarkable, ancient cultures. The Platonic return to the cave resembles the Mahayana Buddhist position rather than the Vedantic one. And yet the Platonic and the Vedantic viewpoints show considerable similarity of insight in their quest for the transcendent and their conceiving of this as an ethico-metaphysical endeavour.

But whereas the shift from *dianoia* to *noesis* is a shift within the overarching framework of the intelligible, the transition from *dharma* to *moksha* seems more radical; this now has to be elucidated. Even though the word

dhārmik serves in common Indian usage for both 'righteous' and 'religious' (equating these almost in the Judaic manner), there is a tendency among scholars to stress that religion, strictly speaking, goes beyond the realm of morality into the realm of 'realization'. The nearest analogy to this position that I can think of would be regarding a 'holy will' in the Kantian sense as a realizable ideal for the human being. On Kant's view, of course, it is no such thing.

To proceed, we have already noticed that there is a profoundly ontological dimension about *dharma. Dharma* both is and ought to be. There is probably a similar tangle involved in discussions about value in some other systems of thought in that values, qua ideals, *are* in a paradigmatic sense. What is required, from our own human perspective, is an actualization of them in the course of life. The trouble is that if the supreme value is seen as beyond good and evil (apart from the difficulty of giving a connotation to 'supreme' divorced from 'good'), as the concept of *moksha* has it, we are in the paradoxical position of lifting it out of the context of living altogether. Other problems include these: how to describe what is presumably beyond description; how to commend as a supreme terminus of the human quest what is supposed to be beyond the sphere of human judgement; and how to prescribe action in conformity with an ideal whose inner meaning connotes the very cessation of action, since all actions bind. The concept of *moksha* in Indian thought represents an extreme form of the urge to 'get away from fact'.

Hindu thought takes the web of human obligations to be, then, intricately structured indeed. A more person-centered philosophy makes room for the ebb and flow of activities respecting others. The ancient Hindus retained what they regarded as the 'privilege' of opting out of these activities for exceptional individuals whose special gifts (and this included inclinations) allowed them to leave aside normal social duties before they had been through the traditional sequence of stages of life. The rest of humanity, however, was in a sense 'condemned not to be free,' or at least constantly reminded of the extent to which the world of getting and spending is ever with us. There was also a concept of *jivanmukti* (freedom within this life) which some systems made room for, but this was envisaged in terms of detachment rather than anything else.

The only route to *moksha* is through *dharma*, since freedom is seen, on this view, not as a presupposition of action but as the culmination of life. It requires a switch in thinking to be able to regard freedom as in opposition to responsibility – freedom being attained after responsibilities are over (on the extreme form of the theory as against the *jivanmukti* form). This shows how different the Indian treatment of freedom is from what we may be accustomed to in other philosophical traditions. It all springs from the conviction (or more properly, presupposition) for it does not seem to have been radically questioned except by the Carvakas and a few others whom orthodoxy probably suppressed) that the wheel of facticity must revolve and that it is possible for man to acquit himself creditably in the *ascesis* which ordinary living involves, but that the ultimate *desideratum* could be a state of being where empiricality would be completely overcome. There are branches of the Indian cluster

of philosophies, Jainism and Hinayana Buddhism, where the highest value is placed on incorporeal existence, that is a state of being after the death of the body, Hinduism at least had the merit of allowing the possibility of liberation during one's lifetime. If one recasts the idea of detachment which goes along with this as a near Stoic refusal to be overwhelmed by the devastating effect of circumstances, one perhaps comes close to what the concept might have meant in the lifeworld of a people who are distant in time and whose way of life has in large part to be reconstructed imaginatively. The theory of separate karmic lines prevented the Hindus from having an 'Atlas-complex' (seeing themselves as called upon to remedy the ills of the world). But that *karma* theory did not stand in the way of the Mahayana Buddhist's compassionate concern to alleviate the suffering of humanity.

Dharma and *moksha* in fact are concepts which cannot really be divorced from a host of other terms with which we cannot deal here. Among these the self, *karma, samsāra,* and *Brahman* are the most important. *Dharma* is a concept which has much bearing on the way in which the empirical self, which is particularistic, is distinguished from the Self seen in a transcendent manner, that is, as identical with ultimate reality or *Brahman*. Not all systems make this conflation. But the Vedantic way of thinking does, and it is this approach which has perhaps been philosophically the most influential in India to this day. *Karma* (which shares the root for the verb 'to do') is the law of action according to which whatever we do is retrospectively conditioned and prospectively determinative. It is not as cast-iron and deterministic a concept as it sounds, for it accommodates the presence of unfulfilled potencies which permit leeway for choice. If it were not so there would have been no place for the concept of *dharma* which is clearly concerned with what one ought to do. This part of the theory can well be compared, for example, with Sartre's tandem affirmation of facticity and freedom, of course just at the level of analogy. *Samsāra* refers to the ongoing course of change to which human beings are subject in a chain of births. It is a concept which in many ways takes the place of evil, for it is seen as something which is inexorable, terrifying and yet challenging (if all of these are mutually compatible). *Dharma* is really the mitigating factor in a world governed by *samsāra*, but from which *moksha* or liberation was believed to be both desirable and possible. The ancient Hindus were deeply conscious of the binding force of actions in the sense that whatever we do affects both ourselves and others. This being 'condemned not to be free' at the empirical level is the form which finitude takes in Hindu thought. The causes of this condition are further spelled out in terms of factors such as cosmic ignorance and inordinate craving – the language varies. In any case it is taken for granted that man is destined for something else in spite of this vast cosmic trap, and this without benefit of a concept of an overriding Providence who has a design for each of His creatures.

It is this long-term prospect (which is the nearest to hope that one can get to in Hindu thinking) that poses a problem regarding the relation between *dharma* and *moksha*. If *moksha* is what is valued supremely, this seems to relegate *dharma* to what is to be finally transcended, and this looks very much

like a philosophy of 'beyond good and evil' which would give us pause. We can move from this to certain other difficulties.

Dharma, as has been shown, is a cosmic principle of ontological status, a principal of individual growth (*svadharma*, or one's own *dharma* which is not a matter of choice but of discovery), and a regulative principle in the face of our relations with others. The sources of *dharma* are not confined to philosophical and legal texts, but also include customs, the habits of good men and the conscience of the enlightened. The last of these sources is especially relevant in modern times, when reformist thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi have advocated a rethinking of *dharma* in order to bring about desirable changes in Hindu society. This is to say that the concept has been appealed to in recent times in order to justify change rather than to legitimize the status quo. Purely secular thinkers, however, have doubted the wisdom of invoking a concept which on the whole has had conservative connotations and, in their view, is associated less with evaluating prevailing states of affairs than with perpetuating them.

To what extent is *dharma* concerned with adjustment to a life of bondage and to what extent does it take us beyond it? The answer may need to combine both alternatives. In this respect once more we have an analogy with other traditions which insist on the autonomy of the ethical and yet conceive it as a path to the spiritual (if this unexamined distinction can be pardoned). It certainly looks as if the concept of *moksha* takes us beyond the distinction of 'is' and 'ought' to being, but in the sense of being-beyond-good-and-evil. And yet the liberated man is often referred to as one in whom the *sattvik* (which can be variously translated as purity, goodness and the like) and *guṇa* (quality) prevails. Now the three *guṇas* (the other two being *rajas*, energy, and *tamas*, inertia) operate at the empirical level. It should be mentioned, however, that this way of putting it is more characteristic of the Sankhya system than of any other. The 'realized soul' according to the *Upanishads*, is *guṇatīta* (beyond the *guṇas*). The matter, of course, needs to be taken historically (never an easy thing to do in inquiring into Indian philosophy), noting the early connection of *dharma* with sacrifice in the Vedic era, the later, less ritualistic ways of relating the temporal and the eternal, and its use as a ground for questioning norms and values. Although the etymological meaning of *dharma* is tied up with conservation,[4] insights into what needs to be conserved evolve as time goes on. This shows the fertility of a concept which, although avowedly referring to what transcends space and time (what is *sanātana* or eternal), yet requires human agency to manifest it. This can be restated something like this: the man of moral integrity articulates Being in his daily activities. This I believe to be an important insight in the context of relating authenticity both to adjudication between possibilities and therein plumbing an ontological stratum which must be accessible to us in some sense, clouded though our vision must needs be. In other words, in Heideggerian terminology *dharma* (rather than the 'concept of dharma') straddles the ontological and the ontic.

The treatise which, to my mind, presents the whole question of the content of *dharma* in the most poignant way is the epic *Mahabhārata*. The

Bhagavad Gītā which is part of this, links up the imperturbability of the *dhārmik* man with faith in God. An element of grace enters what is otherwise a rather Pelagian model. The argument of the *Gītā* passes over what would strike us today as a crucial matter, the role of individual conscience in situations where *prima facie* duties seem otherwise to be clearly indicated, and presents *bhakti* (devotion) as the route to freedom. The medieval *bhakti* cults expectedly had far less to say about *dharma* than, say, Manu did. More illuminating, in my view, is the stance taken by Yudhishthira in the *Mahabhārata*, his realization that not only *adharma* (that which is contrary to *dharma)* brings sorrow, but so also does *dharma* itself; this is a deeply paradoxical insight for one who was said to be *dharmarāj* (the king of *dharma* or *dharma* incarnate). We reach here a central theme in all epic literature, the apparent futility of human efforts, the devastation left behind after heroic deeds, the terrible solitude of the one who enters fully into the infinite extent of human suffering. The *Mahabhārata* is believed to describe events which took place around 1000 B.C. and was written somewhere between 200 B.C. and A.D. 400. The original was called *Jaya,* which means victory. Victory can be hollow and apparent failure can be heroic. And this is but one of the many layers of meaning that can be discovered in this striking work.

Another thing which the long history of the concept of *dharma* seems to me to show is that the clogging effect of fact on human ethical endeavour arises less from the bondage imposed by the physical world than from the intractable nature of human institutions. Both the legalistic aspect of *dharma* and its more general concern with the pattern of a life which is worth living brings out the intransigent character of those structures which man has made for himself. The structure of kingship and its responsibilities, familial obligations, and other societal frameworks seem to get snarled up in such a fashion that the path of duty is alternately unclear, hazardous, or, an even deeper insight, productive of catastrophes unintended by the agents. And yet the regulative function of *dharma* is inevitably mediated through institutions. An epoch and a generation which struggles to recast institutions is in a position to appreciate this. Even so, a modern critic will certainly react against the non-egalitarian bias of some of the attendant concepts, the idea of caste duties for example. The non-Hindu will find strange the notion of duties being performed with an eye to the merit believed to be built up thanks to proper performance. How was this concern for the accumulation of good *karmas* reconciled with the advocacy of disinterestedness? Was it a kind of *Weltschmerz* that gave rise to the stress on *moksha* by later Hindu thinkers?

Whereas *moksha* was a concept reserved for some of the philosophical systems it was the concept of *dharma* which retained its hold over popular thought and practice. Almost every innovator in social thinking in the modern era in India has appealed to *dharma* in the service of a critique of social factuality. Under the influence of various liberating tendencies in society, for example, it is commonly pronounced that caste is no longer associated with *dharma*. On the other hand, it is only fair to grant that *dharma* is also appealed to in defence of regressive positions.

In conclusion, to my mind the literature reveals not only a *vérité de culture* but a *vérité de la condition humaine*. It takes the form of poignant grappling with the contrast between the facticity which enables and the facticity which embroils; the need for roots and the need for branches; the temptation to soar beyond the values embodied in everyday life and seek an empyrean beyond it. Here etymology is suggestive. The sphere of fire, the sun, was as potent a symbol for the ancient Hindus as it was for the Greeks. What beckons is a light which is blinding in its intensity. It is *tapasya* (the austerity which sears) which leads us in this direction. In the meantime we are tried in the refiner's fire – the daily round and common task – the realm of *dharma*.

NOTES

1 Daya Krishna, *Social Philosophy; Past and Future*, Simla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969, pp. 12-13.

2 *Kāma Sūtra, I, 1.*

3 Ibid.

4 Cf. Abel Bengaigne, *La religion Védique d'après les hymnes du Rig-Veda*, III. Paris: 1963, p.210.

Chapter 6

The Concept of Commitment

Excursions into human genealogy bring surprises and this is no less the case with excursions into the genealogy of the words we use. Of words in current usage 'commitment' is one where the exercise may bear some dividends, at least by way of clarification. The extent to which the language of commitment was originally tied up with religious conversion may come as a surprise to those who assume its secular, if not political, origin. A somewhat harsh passage addressed by John the Divine to the church members at Laodicea runs as follows:[1] '...I know all your ways; you are neither hot nor cold. But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth'. He means to say that there is no halfway house as far as religious belief is concerned. The man who is converted in the religious sense turns his back upon one way of life and adopts another. This 'adoption' involves subscription to a set of beliefs and the following of certain patterns of behaviour.[2] This way of understanding conversion can be traced through as far as Kierkegaard and beyond. In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard describes the difference between the hot, cold and the lukewarm in a way which has scarcely been done more clearly since. The man who lives at the aesthetic stage flits from moment to moment seeking happiness in one experience after another in the manner of Don Juan. In simple language one could say that he blows hot and cold. He is a spectator,[3] uninvolved, and so bound to boredom and disillusionment. This lack of involvement is not to be confused with detachment which itself depends on an *ascesis* of a rigorous kind. Kierkegaard's first stage, furthermore, carries with it a certain attitude toward time. The 'aesthete' lives in the present and fails to relate himself either to the past or the future. The past may be taken in its dual sense of one's own individual past and also 'the past' of history. The aesthete is in the position of acquiring a past, in passing through a series of adventures, and yet having no inner understanding of what is happening to him.[4] In his absorption with his own experiences he is naturally indifferent to tradition, to history as the record of social experience. Unrelated to the past in both these senses, the aesthete may be said to be rootless. To be unrelated to the future is an equally serious condition, for this means being without hope. Each moment bears no promise of more. Indeed, this may be the last time. Ironically, in this state where all is possible and nothing actual, man is most necessitated. This is so because the factors which determine mood are all outside the individual. The aesthete is lost in and to circumstance. He is unable to take a stand.

Kierkegaard explains taking a stand by highlighting the turning-point decisions which mark the leap from the aesthetic to the ethical and the leap from the ethical to the religious. These turning-point decisions are passionate experiences, highly subjective, and certainly ones which 'commit' one to definite styles of life, in the case of the ethical individual, to a life of conformity

to the moral law, and in the case of the religious man, to a life of dialogue with, and obedience to, the one transcendent Being, that is, God. No doubt Kierkegaard's understanding of commitment sets more store on encounter (in the Pauline manner) than on subscription to belief. This is because he was anxious to make his standpoint distinct from that of those contemporary churchmen for whom formal allegiance to a set of doctrines was equated with 'being a Christian'. Kierkegaard no doubt was concerned to advocate a religious way of life and in the terms in which he understood it. But the ways in which his approach has nevertheless coloured secular understanding of commitment are worth attention. The 'uncommitted' man is the one who drifts, who is a spectator rather than an actor. He does not make history, rather he is the passive object of historical process. He has no policy for the future and so takes no hand in shaping events. The 'committed' ideologue undergoes, presumably, a crisis of conscience analogous to the Kierkegaardian *metabasis eis allo genos*,[5] and in a mood of fervour he embraces a way of life which, again presumably, affects all he subsequently does.[6] In all these ways the Kierkegaardian leap bears some analogy to the activist's 'plunge'. Among the many differences (there is no need to spell them out here) is the fact that, for Kierkegaard, the life of faith was a solitary affair, a lone relation with transcendent Being, whereas the activist (not however the solitary rebel) joins with others of a like mind in attempting to bring about a new order. That the Messianic conception of a transformed society underwent a secularized sea-change in Marx's political eschatology is too well known to need more than brief mention.

The different ways in which Kierkegaard and Marx reacted to Hegel have been the topic of a considerable corpus of twentieth century philosophical writing. Both men shared a common dislike of rationalist systems which seemed to steam-roller the individual. Both disliked the notion of *Zeitgeist* and both had a preference for concrete situations over abstract theory. Both made their starting-point the actual human condition rather than the requirements of pure reason. For both, strangely enough, the 'uncommitted' individual is an object of pity rather than condemnation. Both wrote of alienation, Kierkegaard of alienation between man and God through sin, and Marx of alienation between man and man through inhuman economic relationships. For both Kierkegaard and Marx there was no vagueness about the remedy prescribed. For both, to shift to philosophers' language, 'to commit oneself', like 'to know', are incomplete expressions. One can only commit oneself to a particular way of life, and this for the religious man no less than for the serious revolutionary is spelt out in some detail, just as one can only know *something*. 'To be committed' is as meaningless as just 'to know'.

From the above it will be clear that the twenty-first century has travelled some distance from the usages briefly sketched above, and the new usages are unfortunately a lot less easy than the old ones to give a content to. The philosophers' dichotomy between speculative philosophy, represented by Hegel, and its opposite, has developed in a multi-tracked manner. Kierkegaard and Marx reacted to Hegel in ways distinctively their own. A single specula-

tive system can be countered not only by a non-speculative system but by another speculative system. Some would go further and say that to speak of 'system' at all is to admit speculation. For example, to extend the dialectical method to the history of societies, as Marx did, was certainly to employ speculation.

But with the further development of anti-Hegelianism, thought and action came to be regarded in a dichotomous manner, a manner which in fact collapses on the least reflection, with the exception of the limit case of reflex action. This came about through an identification of thought with theory and action with practice. The action advocated by Marx was on the other hand highly informed with theory, the dialectic of social change, and even the rationalist system of Hegel bore certain practical implications as far as statecraft and property relations were concerned. But not all twentieth century intellectuals took the trouble to analyse terms like 'condition' and 'situation' with the care of Marx, or Dewey, and these are the terms which serve to show up the untenability of maintaining a dichotomy between thought and action in the context of a meaningful analysis of commitment.

Another matter sometimes lay behind the discussion,[7] although somewhat covertly, the critique of contemplation. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the complexities of living, especially industrial living, along with its accompanying institutional frameworks, encouraged in certain quarters not only a devaluation of contemplation but a positive reaction against it. The need of the times seemed, and perhaps still seems, to lie in active tackling of the evils of social inequality, poverty and exploitation. The anti-contemplation advocates sometimes allied themselves with the anti-theory advocates, although contemplation and theory are by no means the same thing, for those who have gone in for contemplation in a rigorous sense have done so out of a sense of commitment and using techniques which could certainly be classified under 'actions'. In India those who talked of commitment were in a peculiar position. They allied themselves against the contemplativists, and followers of various godmen,[8] but invoked theory perhaps even more than their confrère ideologues in the West. They were reacting against two strands in the local culture, that which set a positive value on maintaining the status quo in the name of *dharma*, and that which set a positive value on meditation. Moreover, they wanted to expose the class allegiance of those who advocated material austerity for others but prosperity for themselves. All these were, and still are, healthy reactions. But the timelag in the use of terms appeared at times in the usage of the word 'committed' to express all this, so much so that to write or speak of a 'committed' man at times almost carried the same overtones as writing or speaking of a 'good' man. That this should have been possible has come about thanks to the divergent experiences of Western countries and of India in the thirties and forties.

The thirties and forties saw the flourishing of totalitarian regimes in Europe and the collapse of two of these, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, as an outcome of the Second World War. Many Nazis and Fascists, no doubt, were 'committed' to their respective ideologies in that they chose to join the parties

concerned knowingly and of their own free will. Thousands of others, however, were caught up in the systems, hardly realizing what they were doing or what the consequences would be. In opposition to these regimes, especially in opposition to Franco's Spain, many well meaning people became committed Stalinists. When Stalinism was exposed for what it was, their disillusionment knew no bounds. Their god had failed.

Talk of commitment *per se*, therefore, is more or less passé in Western democracies since the Western experience has been that it all depends on what one is committed to, that one may need to be committed to something very different tomorrow, and, in any case, what needs to be done in any particular situation cannot be found out through the mechanical application of a formula. Disillusionment in the two-thirds world has been of a different kind. It includes, for example, disillusionment with the persistence of colonial-style steel frames and value systems in the newly independent countries, failure to tackle seats of privilege because party power has to be maintained at all costs, inability of 'free' governments to control sectional interests, and disenchantment with nationalization, planning, etc. as magic formulae for curing national ills – to mention only some of the elements which have impacted unfavourably on lifeworlds.

The Western experience, then, must be borne in mind in turning to a searching critique of those who speak of commitment in an article written by Louis J. Halle in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* in the spring of 1973, the general tenor of which identifies 'commitment' with fanaticism. Halle detects two underlying assumptions made by the advocates of commitment, that political issues are issues of right and wrong, and that intellectuals are enlightened and can therefore distinguish between the two. He could have added that, as well as the belief that 'the others' are wrong, there is often the belief that they are wicked. To mention this is to be reminded of the theological ancestry of this whole question, a matter with which we began. It would appear to follow from the two assumptions cited, by converse, that the 'uncommitted' man is tolerant, as against the intolerance of the committed man; that he does not simplify political issues into issues of right and wrong, and that he does not endow intellectuals with any special political wisdom. A little reflection will show that these do not actually 'follow' at all because the term 'uncommitted' covers not only one but many possibilities.

The 'uncommitted' man (I use this customary parlance for the sake of argument) may not be tolerant but may be indifferent.[5] Alternately, he may be committed about some matters, in the sense of pursuing them with might and main, for example, he may feel committed to reading one newspaper rather than another, and yet 'uncommitted' about political matters. Or, about political matters, he may take a definite line about certain things, for example, the iniquities of racism, and either an inconsistent or 'indifferent' line about other political matters. The 'uncommitted' man may even be of the opinion that seemingly political issues only need to be tackled at the socio-economic level. In other words, a man uncommitted to political ideology X may be committed

to political ideology Y or to an ostensibly non-political ideology. This by no means exhausts the possibilities.

Let us look at Halle's two assumptions more closely. First, that political issues are issues of right or wrong. Here it is clear that an uncommitted man, in the narrow connotation of 'not committed' to ideology X, may in a very definitive manner look at political issues as issues of right or wrong. The pacifist would be a case in point. Uncommitted to ideology X, he is nonetheless strongly committed to his pacifism. Whether pacifism should be described as an ideology would take us into semantics. It may, in fact, often be the case that the man committed to ideology X will be *least* able to view political issues in terms of right or wrong. The criterion for him may well be 'what the leader says is right, or 'what the party says is right' or 'what country A, B or C does is right'. It may, of course, be objected that the criterion will still be that of right or wrong, but that right and wrong are being interpreted not in a 'formal' manner but in a 'material' manner. It would then appear that where political issues were at stake there would be only two options, one of which *should* be opted for and the other eschewed. Less technically, political choices are between black and white. Let us consider this further.

In an earlier paper of mine written on ethical perplexity,[10] I suggested that whereas moral reflection may reveal a central territory of clear cases, where one can say that this is right and that is wrong, there are borderline cases where the question is that of more or less, of balancing factors, where, for example, we say 'It is better to do this rather than that'. It may be that, in political matters, the clear case approach is less called for than the 'weighing of alternatives' approach. Why this might be so is because of the magnitude of the imponderables. But the consciousness of imponderables and the difficulty of weighting them is precisely the thing which the 'committed' man may diagnose as political immaturity, bad faith and the rest. This is not to deny that there can be clear cases of right and wrong in politics. There may be disagreement over the choice of examples but let me essay one. It would be right for a democracy to protect its minorities. But whether it would be right to protect a particular minority or weaker section by *positive* discrimination, say, to the extent of encouraging it to perpetuate its backwardness or separateness, can be a matter controversy. What would be right in the circumstances, better rather than worse, might not be easily determined, and certainly not determined by quick reference to any mechanical formula or ideology. In fact, phrases like 'advisable in the circumstances', 'best in the long run', 'feasible at the moment' come to mind in the context of political issues. Often, when the word 'wrong' is used in a political context, another word can, without loss of clarity, be substituted in its place. For example, instead of saying 'It would be wrong for an M.P. to vote against his party in a division', we can without loss of meaning, and even with some gain in clarity, say 'It would be acting against the mandate given by his constituency for an M.P. to vote against his party in a division'. What I am suggesting is that the words right and wrong should not be used as vague terms of approbation and abuse. This is, needless to say, not to advocate the divorcing of morals and politics.

The second of Halle's assumptions concerns the belief that intellectuals have a special knack in being able to distinguish between right and wrong in political issues. If what has been said above can be reiterated, political situations are situations of complexity, where determination of what is feasible and what is best in the circumstances require knowledge of the facts, along with that of the interests of all concerned. Now there is no doubt that the word 'commitment' is utilized by intellectuals (a vague term, but roughly designable as a sort of class, and, as Gandhiji rightly said, therefore to be distinguished from the masses) and those intellectuals who utilize it perhaps annex commitment initially for themselves, thereafter claiming that others *ought* to be committed. If Halle is on the right track in affirming that those who talk of commitment assume that intellectuals are specially enlightened, and can therefore distinguish between right and wrong in politics better than the unenlightened masses can, we are on to something which not only does not seem to tally with the facts, but which tallies ill with the political method and 'style' of democracy. That intellectuals should be in the vanguard of decision-making sometimes historically may have happened to be the case, but it is not an inevitable concomitant of the method of appeal to majority decision. In developing countries, intellectuals tend to dominate at the bureaucratic level rather than elsewhere. In other words, those whose natural role is that of critics of the establishment, become a part of it. It is this class in fact which is the most alienated from the masses and least able to speak on their behalf. Take the question of the drawing of a state boundary. The opinion of the intellectuals sitting in government offices, or in the legislature, may have no special weightage of wisdom over the opinions of the villagers in that particular area. Certainly we imagine that intellectuals *should* possess some kind of credentials as political educators. But there is no *prima facie* case for this. As far as commitment is concerned, not political commitment, but the step-by-step follow through of the implications of earlier decisions, this is best understood by the villager. To plant seeds is to be committed to seeing to their irrigation, weeding, protection from pests, harvesting of the crop and so forth. Moreover, if political education is confined to the pointing out of a commitment to vote in a certain way every five years, and this results in no tangible benefit, an electorate cannot be blamed for retreating to the multiple commitments of individuals and group interests.

To return to Halle. He diagnoses twentieth century advocacy of commitment by some of the intelligentsia as a call to abandon thought for action, and, as such, stresses its dangers, if not its sinister possibilities, especially the possibility of abandonment of *thoughtful* and continued examination of the *changing* situation. It is not only the professional theoretician who runs the risk of being dubbed uncommitted, but the artist, too, has long been open to this kind of attack. Halle cites the example of Goethe studying minerals while Napoleon's troops were massing round Weimar, and Wanda Landowska recording Scarlatti in 1940 with the Nazis nearing Paris. The artist's prime commitment is to his craft. Commitment to an ideology *may* result in a work of art but it is more likely to result in propaganda. The artist who, in time of

war, defends his abstention from war service by saying that he personifies the culture which others are fighting to defend, may be regarded by the majority as a parasite. If he is a *great* artist, however, his defence can by no means be written off as a symptom of parasitism. The intellectual who is not an artist is in no position to exhort the artist to be committed.[11] At the most, in terms of his own commitment, he might exhort the artist to widen the range of his communication, so that what he expresses can reach the masses. But he is not strictly in a position to do this, for a retreat from communication is itself a form of communication (cf. abstract painting, aleatory music and gimmicky poetry), and no one can dictate to the artist in which way he should communicate.

With this aside on the artist and his commitment let us return to the relation of thought and action and see if the word 'commitment' throws any light on the relation between the two. Kant's Copernican Revolution was in a sense the 'ancestor' of the subsequent approaches which shared in common the belief that it is human activity which bestows meaning on the world. For Kant, the activity was located in the formal *a priori* functions of reason, both theoretical and practical; for Marx, it was the ways in which men organize their economic relationships; for Husserl, it was the multifarious intentional acts of consciousness; and, for the existentialists, it was the act of engagement. The history of science makes it clear that the relation of hypotheses to fact is not a mechanical one, and that hypothesis enters into the determination of fact. The situation is even more intricate when we turn to the relation between programme, policy, and social reality. If physical facticity is a drag on many projects in the natural sciences, it is human facticity, a shifting and changing affair, which can often be a drag on efforts to transform social reality for the better.[12] One could compare here Brunet's dilemma in Sartre's *The Iron in the Soul*[13] with the scientist's one. Brunet says: 'It is true enough that I've got to work in the dark. But what alternative was there? – to do nothing?' The darkness is ignorance of what the others have done or will do. The scientist's dilemma is ignorance of the other aspects of the system he is dealing with, to say nothing of other systems, for example, how a particular pesticide will affect the ecological balance. An inelastic commitment to a particular policy in the face of counter indications is as 'unscientific' as the adherence to a particular hypothesis in the face of negative instances. The variables in social situations, as against laboratory situations, involve many factors which cannot be controlled. Here, of course, we reach a point of controversy. The totalitarian will maintain not only that the factors can be controlled but that they *should* be controlled.

The partial perspective, in Karl Mannheim's phrase, which an ideology represents, apparently provides a handy framework for decision-making, but the utility of such a framework is increasingly questionable as soon as provisionality, openness, and especially, the various imponderables of a multicultural society, are given due weight. It is worth pointing out that even a partial perspective, say secularism, does not 'entail' any particular policy for implementation. It might exclude, purely pragmatically, not logically, certain

measures, for example, bribing one section of the community to perform hostile acts against another section. But it will not positively *entail* any particular measure any more than the general directives of a Constitution positively *entail* any particular legislative measure. As for the concept of 'total perspective' this seems to have content only as a regulative idea. Even a planning authority, aiming at being as objective as possible, can never attain a total perspective, nor only because of the magnitude of present unknown factors, but because of inherent ignorance of the future. The coordinates of space and time are inescapable. In this connection Pierre Furter makes an interesting suggestion – not to 'eliminate the risks of temporality by clutching to guaranteed space, but rather to temporalize space… a scope, a domain which takes shape as I act upon it'.[14]

As it happens, the ideas that grow out of concrete situations as those concerned apply their minds to them often show up the irrelevance of ideologies.[15] The man who finds a particular perspective unsatisfactory may do so not on the ground of personal vagary, in Dahrendorf's phrase, but because he believes that social engineering in a piecemeal manner[16] is likely to do *less harm* than monolithic changes according to an ideological blueprint. Such a man, so far from claiming a 'total perspective' recognizes only too well the limits of our knowledge. It may well be that it is on the basis of a commitment to the integrating perspective of humanism that he holds back from anything that smacks of totalitarianism. But there is a difference between such ultimate commitment and the particular commitments which could be described as the 'break-up' of the ultimate commitment in terms of policy. Particular commitments need to be subject to a constant process of revision. Self-criticism and particular commitments stand or fall together. The political fanatic is the one who not only makes a partial perspective into an ultimate commitment, but even a particular commitment becomes for him an ultimate commitment.

The question next arises whether there is any difference between individual and social commitment. Apart from questions like whether a concept such as that of 'conscience' can be extrapolated from the individual to the social level, it seems pretty clear that a particular commitment at the social level will be a matter of policy, something which is the result of the push and pull of joint decision-making. A group can obviously be 'committed' to a particular course of action. For example a committee can be committed to producing a report by a certain date, in the sense that it is within their terms of reference to do so. A public body can deny that it is committed to do XYZ on a variety of possible grounds, e.g. that there has been no legislation which prescribes it, or no public statement of intention to undertake it.

An interesting issue concerns the ways in which one commitment may be said to be tied up with others. A commitment to produce a report within a certain time need not be tied up with three-hourly sittings each day. A commitment by an institution to increase the number of posts *is* however tied up with advertising the same in time. Failure to do so is not a failure of logical acumen but a matter of *mala fides*. The spelling out of what one is *not* commit-

ted to do, whether in the individual or group sense, brings in many questions concerning social dynamics.

Let us take the case of a college Principal who denies that he is committed to forwarding the demands of the Employees Union in his institution to higher authorities. A distinction will need to be made, as in the case of analyzing individual ethical situations, between the standpoint of the agent and the spectator. We will take first the standpoint of the college Principal. Let us, for the sake of simplification, exclude the case of written legal obligations where commitment can be established through legal interpretation. Barring this, failure to admit a particular commitment may be taken to arise from a certain interpretation of interests, whether in response to a pressure group or not, including under this that it is within one's interests to take account of *other* commitments. From the side of the other party in the dispute (the union workers are of course by no means 'spectators') the failure appears as evidence of *mala fides*. The situation shows up the relation of alienation between the two.

Needless to say the concept of 'not being committed to X or Y' by no means always involves alienation. Any particular commitment has a delimited range of reference depending on the relationship concerned. A good example would be the sort of thing set out in insurance policies. The class of things one is not committed to may often be clearly specifiable, for example, A, in marrying B is specifically not committed to marrying C, D, E, etc. There are cases, however, where the self-limitation inherent in any particular commitment can become the shelter for *excuse*. For example, a government may maintain it is committed to the maintaining of law and order, but not to the provision of employment for all its citizens. This brings up the question whether it makes sense to say that one, whether individual or group, *ought* to be committed to XYZ. To take an example – it does make sense to say that 'All nations ought to be committed to the resolution of disputes by peaceful means'. In fact this brings out the point we have insisted on throughout, that 'to be committed' *per se* is vacuous, and that commitment is always to a certain course of action.

Let us next see whether the distinction between ultimate and particular commitment applies at the group level. One may well ask if an institution can be 'committed' (in respect of having an ultimate commitment) in the sense in which an individual can. Can the style of an ecclesia be adopted, say, by a civil service or a judiciary? Even if it were possible, there would still be the question whether it were desirable. Ultimate commitments are a matter for individual conscience or ecclesia/commune-type institutions. To speak of a judiciary, say, as being 'committed' (apart from the general sense in which everyone is supposed to do their duty as faithfully as they can and which would apply not only to the judiciary but to anyone whatsoever) is to confuse particular commitment with ultimate commitment, and this usually through the mediating agency of a partial perspective. In an authoritarian regime the call for commitment *per se* is invariably a call for conformism, a ruling out of the possibility that one might be mistaken. My main caveat about partial perspectives should now be clearer – that those who adopt them are usually unwilling

to recognize their partiality. No doubt when the partiality is recognized, this kind of 'speculative instrument' (for this is what it is) can unlock some doors. The snag, in my view, is the temptation to regard a partial perspective as a master key, and, for some, the temptation is almost irresistible.

Let us see whence we have come. 'Commitment' is a relatively new word in Western social thinking, although we had no difficulty in tracing the idea back in time in the context variously of religious conversion, the ethic of the revolutionary, existentialist engagement, and decision-making in general. The quest of meaning in action is an objective which unites the Marxist, the pragmatist, the existentialist and the *karma yogin*. There is a risk, however, in over-philosophizing about the issue. The man escaping from a concentration camp, the commune member doing his stint with the washing-up, the sculptor chiselling his stone, the wakeful parent tending a sick child, the toddler at play – all find meaning in action. The actions even in this small list of examples are very diverse. The commitments involved are likewise very diverse. There would be no sense in saying to any of the individuals concerned that they '*should be* committed' *per se*. A man can only be committed to *something*. We then noticed the difference between ultimate and particular commitments and the role of partial perspectives. One major question remains, whether there can be 'reasons for' ultimate commitments.

This question has been discussed at length in the considerable literature on humanism which has appeared in recent years. The ground for heart-searching has been the suspicion that those who appealed to ultimate commitments were appealing to something irrational and that the rationality of a standpoint could be measured by the reasons given for holding it. Here we run into a difficulty. For while it is the mark of a particular commitment that reasons can be given for it, indeed a particular social commitment can only be embarked upon as the terminus of a round of argument, ultimate commitments seem to be like logical stoppers or verificatory termini – either one sees or one does not see. One of the basic differences, for example, between the authoritarian and the liberal is that the latter thinks, on the one hand, that certain freedoms are to be preserved at all costs, even, say, at the cost of inefficiency, and on the other hand that outside the spheres of the pure sciences and the verification of simple sentences like 'There is an elephant in the front garden,' most questions about human affairs are susceptible of a whole range of answers. Does being rational always involve the ability to give reasons? Yes, if among 'reasons' we include appeal to attitude, belief and standpoint. This, no doubt, leads to a certain regress. But to be able to identify and articulate the grounds of ultimate commitment is the prerequisite of any *dialogue* between men holding different ultimate commitments. The dialogue may even reveal a community of ultimate commitment at certain points. The greater part of our disagreements concern ways and means of attaining certain objectives, especially in the area of socio-economic thinking. The particular commitments we may make along the line are, or should be, as tentative as the scientist's temporary try-out of particular hypotheses. The only criterion in both cases is their practical utility.

This may seem too lukewarm a position to have reached about a concept wielded with vigour by many as a way of distinguishing between the good and the bad. But, in some uses of 'committed', Genghis Khan and Al Capone appear to qualify no less than Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa. It is such uses of 'committed' that I have excluded as vacuous. I have also tried to uncover uses of the word where dogmatism and fanaticism are smuggled in by the back door. Our commitments must have an identifiable content. That content in turn needs to be subject to a constant process of criticism. As ultimate commitment one might suggest the following in the context of all lifeworlds:

- It matters what one does.
- One should as far as possible act knowingly, not unthinkingly.
- Knowledge, the pragmatic assessment of the situation, needs to be supplemented by compassion.
- Actions should be shaped by reference to the common weal.

Spelling this out in terms of particular commitments is a matter of the collective pooling of wisdom, devotion and work of those concerned. It is not a matter of any great difficulty to give intellectual assent to the four points mentioned above. But as Dag Hammerskjöld once remarked: 'The great commitment is so much easier than the ordinary everyday one – and can all too easily shut our hearts to the latter'.

NOTES

1 *Revelations*, ch.3, v.16.

2 Believing, saying and doing are all bound up with commitment. To what extent they can be said to be *criteria* of commitment needs further exploration.

3 The words 'aesthete' and 'spectator' have a common root.

4 Cf. St. Augustine's inner understanding of his own past history, after his conversion.

5 Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*.

6 The gap between profession and practice can occur both in the case of the adherent of a religious way of life and the man who subscribes to a secular ideology.

7 Notably in some countries in the two thirds world.

8 To use a term coined by Peter Brent.

9 It is precisely this sort of uncommittedness which arouses the ire of the ideologue, an attitude which seems to the latter to involve conservatism in politics and a policy of *laissez faire* in economics.

10 *Journal of the Indian Academy of Philosophy*, Calcutta, 1966.

11 One of the things that existentialists stress, following Nietzsche, is the creativity of action. The snag is that authenticity as a criterion of ethi-

cal action offers no way of discriminating between creative and destructive action.

12 Social change can be for the better or for the worse.

13 Penguin Edition, p. 289.

14 *Educacao-e-Vida*, 1966, pp.26-7.

15 See Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin edition, 1972.

16 The piecemeal social engineer meets his biggest challenge in the time factor. Cf. Coretta Scott King: 'For our children have only one life to live, one education to get, one chance of dignity and peace. That is why we need freedom now, not ten years hence. In ten years our own children will be well through their schooling'.

Chapter 7

The Concept of Multiple Allegiance

One of the common stereotypes regarding Hindu lifeworlds centres round the concept of tolerance – an elastic term which in this context has a rather different connotation from what it had in John Locke's England. Of course, there have been many ready to disclaim the applicability of the concept to the Hindu syndrome, since some look upon 'Hindu religion' as a question-begging term. The caste system, and attitudes to those outside the fold, *inter alia*, have been cited by the disclaimers. Those who support the 'tolerance' view have appealed to the capacity Hindu communities have had, historically, to *assimilate* elements from outside, whether these be people, customs, ideas, or what have you. This, plus a hierarchical social structure and a belief-system centering on the notion of stages of life and patterns of behaviour appropriate to them, makes for a culture-pattern which accommodates diversity, which, one could say, is 'hospitable'.

The factors which determine the *limits* of this hospitality are as interesting as those which encourage it. Dietary habits, for example, can give way before the demands of factors as various as hospitality, the alleged requirements of social ambition e.g. consumption of liquor by the nouveau riche, medical necessity, and so on; or they may be reinforced in a kind of backs-to-the-wall attempt to assert cultural identity.

In what follows, the concept of multiple allegiance is not taken as equivalent to that of tolerance which seems to be ambiguous and weak in terms of explanatory power. Rather an attempt will be made to see if multiple allegiance – which seems to contrast with commitment – can throw any light on the hospitality of Hindu worldviews. Reference will also be made to Christian communities in the West by way of comparison.

The history of Christian peoples reflects the operation of the Either-Or principle in a variety of ways. Not that there have not been impressive syntheses, of which the Book of Common Prayer is a well-known example. But institutionalization, on the one hand, and the development of credal systems, on the other, have tended to rule out the Both/And approach. To the Jew and the Christian, religious life is associated, if not identified, with religious commitment. One can be a Catholic *or* a Protestant; can believe in the Trinity or not, and so forth. Admittedly many of the sects which grew up were historical attempts to have one's cake and eat it. But these compromises in turn solidified into positions about which a stand had to be taken one way or another. For example, if Tractarianism satisfied the High Anglican's craving for some of the consolations of Roman Catholicism, it was none the less true that to be an Anglo-Catholic from the 1830s onwards has meant, *ipso facto*, *not* to be a Low Churchman. My point is that even where a new sect initially reflected a compromise or synthesis, the adherence it subsequently called for tended to be of an exclusive kind.

The proliferation of sectarianism in nonconformist Christianity provides an interesting illustration of what I may call the single-allegiance principle. To be a Plymouth Brother is, *ipso facto, not* to be a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or the like. Certain compatibilities, however, show themselves in 'fringe' activities in religious life. Let me essay some examples. A Plymouth Brethren family may send their children to a nearby Baptist Sunday School. This may come about for a variety of reasons, e.g. friendship among the children in the respective communities (the neighbourhood principle), or the attraction of a specific facility (a club, provision for music). A certain amount of coming and going is found in attendance at women's meetings, again with non-doctrinal factors like the popularity of a speaker, the reputation of parties, socials and outings, coming into operation. The hardcore participants in the fringe activities in each case will usually be the same as the participants in the regular acts of worship. But one can still not generalize about compatibilities at the non-conformist level as one can, say, about the incompatibilities between Catholic and Protestant, e.g. the unlikelihood of a Catholic child attending a Protestant Sunday School. The ecumenical movement represents a broad-based move towards the discovery of a common platform, both doctrinal and liturgical, which it seems to me, is as different from tolerance, on the one hand, as it is from 'compatibility,' on the other. It may be noticed, moreover, that even where 'integration' has taken place, original denominational allegiances may show themselves when the question of receiving the Eucharist arises, or at times of weddings and funerals. There is one further compatibility which can be found sometimes in the 'mixed marriage'. The child of a Methodist and a Baptist may, say, attend a Methodist church and a Baptist Sunday School. The parallel in India would be the case of the child of a Hindu/Sikh marriage whose own marriage to a Hindu was performed in a *gurdwara* (a very common practice in North India).

The crucial matter, however, in Christian communities (I am not considering here 'non-believers' or the occasional dilettante church visitor) concerns 'initiation' or ceremonies, to use an anthropological term. Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, etc. have different rites for initiation into church membership. So, the test of primary allegiance for 'professing' Christians will be which rite is followed, irrespective of the number of fringe activities in which a person may take part in other denominations. The experience of conversion works against the likelihood of plural participation, in so far as the converted man will most probably remain in the community in which he 'saw the light'. The exclusive demands of this association in terms of attendance at church meetings, say, may in practice rule out participation in fringe activities in other denominations. What keeps the new adherent on the rails, so to speak, is his membership inf an institution and the doctrinal complex to which he *ipso facto* subscribes in becoming a member of the institution.

In so far as churches in the West act as foci for a considerable amount of social activity, this social function can, even so, in varying degrees be cut adrift from the core religious function of the church and in that way attract those 'outside' in the sense of 'in other churches' or 'in no church at all'. In our

times, a 'successful' youth club will often have this function, the connotation of 'successful' being understood to be 'successful in attracting young people'. A 'live church' is marked by the variety of its activities beginning with Sunday worship, and proliferation of meetings of various kinds, e.g. children's worship, young people's activities, scripture study, women's guilds, etc. The point is that the various activities take place under particular religious auspices and on the premises of the institution in question. It is noteworthy that an apparently secular activity, e.g. an annual women's outing including picnicking, sight-seeing, organized games, etc. can take place under religious auspices. Likewise, fund-raising comes into the picture just as it would in any secular organization. Needless to say, someone who participates in the activities of a particular church may also participate in various non-religious organizations as well. In spite of all the variations mentioned above, the chances are that the 'practising' Christian will focus his devotional life in the particular institution of which he is a member. This is where he 'belongs'.

Let us see how all this compares with Indian religious behaviour, bearing in mind that the two mainstays of 'consistent' or 'one-stream' religious behaviour for the practicing Christian are the institution to which he belongs and the doctrinal complex to which he subscribes in so belonging. We have seen how, other things being equal, belonging to institution X and subscribing to its doctrines is, *ipso facto*, *not* to belong to institution Y, Z, etc. or subscribe to their doctrines. Bearing in mind the absence of institutionalized religion or credal complexes it becomes easy to see the extent to which the Hindu is free from the Either/Or compulsion which besets the Christian. He is, especially, free from the saved/unsaved dichotomy. In being 'on the way' he is neither radically sinful nor completely 'saved'. His progressive liberation extends over many lives and this mitigates the urgency of his taking a stand here and now. The fractional view of truth makes not only for modesty of claims to truth, but encourages an extension of insights through further fractions. In the absence of belief in one Saviour, 'one Name through whom ye may be saved', new claimants can elicit homage. Furthermore, the very absence of institutionalized religion serves to make attractive the proliferating religious and religio-political organizations which can provide a locus for piety and for social activities (even gymnastics and drilling) which bring people together outside the festivals determined by the calendar. A lacuna in Hindu religious life is thereby filled.

The stage is set for what I call 'multiple allegiance'. Moreover, where religious life is not founded on historic events (the prophets, the birth of Christ) but on mythic participation in sacred space and time, room is left for foci of religious observance to be built up round historic movements (cf. the Arya Samaj), leaders and present-day charismatic figures, which can provide foci of inspiration and comfort consonant with the cultic figures of mediaeval Hinduism, that is to say, with those aspects of Hinduism that fall outside the mainstream pattern of Brahmanism. Added to this is the fascination of the 'holy man' who can attract even more attention than the 'good preacher' in Christian circles. The holy man is not an intermediary, but the immediate fo-

cus of a kind of decentralized spiritual power. At one extreme this power may be *alaukik* in the literal sense, i.e. supra-natural or magical. But at the other end of the spectrum we confront a kind of saintliness which is recognizable even in the absence of strange powers and, indeed, whose best evidence is the absence of such powers (cf. Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi).

All this provides a background for understanding the educated Hindu who begins his day with listening to a discourse on the Gita early in the morning in a city park (prefaced perhaps by some yogic exercises in the same place), performs his own ritual *puja* at home or in the temple and perhaps has '*darshan*' of Sai Baba at an evening gathering. His daughter's wedding may be performed at a *gurdwara*, and traditional '*havan*' offered at the funerals of his family members. To complicate it further, taking this as a North Indian example, he may well be a member of the Arya Samaj on the ground that his father was a leading light in the movement in pre-Independence days. In Bengal a typical cluster of allegiances may run something like this: visits to the temple (or ritual gestures as one passes by in the tram), attendance at the Ramakrishna Mission lectures, and attendance elsewhere under various auspices wherever discourses on the *Gitā* might be held. Such practices constitute important elements in the lifeworld of one who goes in for them.

At this point it might be worth while to look a little closer at the link between personality cults and powers. Twentieth-century existentialist thought has familiarized us with the distinction between an ethic of the person and an ethic of principle. We have in Indian religious studies a distinction between the 'saviour' cults and Brahmanism. Drawing on these two sets of distinctions we can gain an insight into what some of the twentieth-century cults provide. They seem to stand halfway between the full-fledged 'saviour' cults and *dharma*. But they do so in very different ways. Much is usually made of the point that allegiance to the core figure in no way conflicts with traditional belief. The intellective content and the directedness of the 'therapy', however, varies greatly. The combination of devotion plus belief in miracles to be found in the Sai Baba cult ties in with traditional belief in the *alaukik* powers of holy men. The Krishnamurti adherent is of a radically different kind. The discourse method, the questioning technique, the refusal to acquiesce in easy answers and indeed refusal of any claim to be a 'saviour' (it was this that sparked off his breakaway from his original patron) and the complete absence of any 'miraculous' setting, ties in with the intellectual approach to be found in the Upanisads. In the Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi type of devotionalism (I refer to the attitudes of their devotees and not to their own modes of religious experience) we have a less intellectual style of religiosity, centered in a figure who attracts by the very authenticity of his own religious experience. They exemplify the great tradition of those who, in the eyes of their devotees, have risen above daily bondage and who are therefore both exemplars and independent foci of devotion.

In eastern India the reform movements during the last part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century threw up two major figures who elicit the devotion of many. One of these was Sri Ramakrishna, already

mentioned, and the other was Sri Aurobindo. In both cases institutions have grown up round these central figures, and in the latter case there are also cultic practices of an elaborate kind. In the *puja* room of many Bengali houses pictures of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo take their place beside those of Kali, Krishna and other deities. Where the family is Aurobindite, pictures of the founder and of the Mother may even be found in every room and incense be burned at certain times during the day in front of these pictures. Whereas 'magical' elements appear to be absent in the Ramakrishna style of devotionalism, such elements can be detected in some of the practices of the devotees of the Mother in the shape of gnomic messages, amulets, 'icons', etc. One key to the multiple allegiance situation in Bengali religiosity is the historical compatibility of Tantrism with Hinduism and Buddhism. Furthermore, the 'pantheon' idea (as, likewise, the belief in 'saints' in Catholicism) presents an open-ended model which can admit of successive additions. The kathenotheist form of early Indian religion makes room for the admission of many gods, each with specific functions, along with special deference given to one of the gods. The modern form of this allows for the routine Hindu observances during the calendar year, e.g. the performance of Durga puja, Lakshmi puja, Kali puja, etc. plus, say, a family allegiance to Sri Aurobindo, with attendant visits to the Pondicherry ashram, financial commitments to the latter, and so forth. There is no doctrinal incompatibility between allegiance to Durga and allegiance to Sri Aurobindo or Sri Ramakrishna. In fact if we take as evidence of the content of religious life the 'icons' to be found in the puja room (a neglected source of evidence, I think) the multiple allegiance hypothesis may be found to show a near-Protean form. For along with Kali, Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo pictures of Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose may well be seen. Respect and reverence are akin to worship, and the 'great soul' readily receives homage, even devotion, which in Hindu religiosity in no way strikes a discordant note within the diapason of an individual's religious life. The attainments of others along the spiritual path confirm faith in the possibility of spiritual heroism, and the constant remembrance of the cloud of witnesses encourages the devotee on his daily path. The co-presence of mythic and historical figures does not appear incongruous. In fact the presence of historic figures who have lived mightily, maybe in very different fields, bridges the gulf between mythical heroes and common-or-garden mortals which *dharma*, abstractly conceived, cannot.

The incompatibilities, the Either / Or elements we noticed earlier in the context of Christian communities, are much harder to find in Indian religious life. Let us try to find a few examples. A Brahmo Samaj family, committed to Unitarian theism, may be expected not to undertake a pilgrimage from *pandal* to *pandal* at Durga puja time. The lady of the house may nevertheless keep a supply of sweets in readiness for visitors who come to convey Bijoya greetings. In this case a doctrinal reservation (rejection of polytheism) in no way interferes with a cultural observance. It is, however, by contrast, impossible to conceive of a Baptist smearing himself with ash on Ash Wednesday, or a Quaker visitor to the Vatican receiving the Holy Eucharist at St. Peter's.

The comparison is perhaps not quite on all fours, but I let it stand by way of provocation.

Regional and historical factors lie behind the particular groupings of allegiances and likewise behind the 'limits of hospitality' we find in Indian religious life, rather than the doctrinal issues which gave rise to sectarianism in Christendom. Questions remain, e.g. whether there is anything special about the multiple allegiance within *today's* religious spectrum in India, and whether this is an urban phenomenon rather than otherwise. The innovations in contemporary Indian religious life have by no means been determined by "genteel strata of intellectuals devoted to the purely cognitive comprehension of the world and of 'meaning'", in Max Weber's phrase. With the exception of the Ramakrishna movement, contemporary cults are not conspicuous for their zeal in social reform. They live side by side with orthodoxy, without any attempt to transform it. They are thus to be contrasted with the reformist movements of the so-called Bengal Renaissance which cast a critical eye on the 'great tradition' and latter-day offshoots of movements like the Arya Samaj, which were originally reformist but which now appear to be carrying on a rearguard action against progressive social change. The type of religiosity developed seems to be devotional rather than contemplative. While some movements in north and west India conflate political rightism and Hindu chauvinism and are as such markedly xenophobic, the 'god-men' cults appear to be mostly apolitical although there are some exceptions. If attendance at mass gatherings is any criterion of the 'reach' of these cults, the main clientele seems to be middle-class, and the mood seems to be inspirational rather than that of contemplative mysticism or ecstasy. We have an interesting contrast here with the grassroots appeal that characterized the saviour cults of the middle ages. The weakening of the nationalist impulse (a post-Independence phenomenon) and the pulverization brought about by urban living and the consequent hunger for some of the aspects of organized religion – these are some of the factors which lead the middle-aged and elderly middle-class to seek for a renewal of inner religion combined with the 'warmth' of congregational attendance. Excessive politicization of public life can bring about a reaction, a search for reassurance in community, something which, as such, is by no means other-worldly.

I now recapitulate the drift of the foregoing discussion. Indian religious life has shown and still shows a contrast to the decisional pattern which characterizes Christian communities in the West[1]. The injunction "Come ye apart and be separate" gave a sanction to the preservation of institutional identity through adherence to distinguishable doctrinal positions. 'Belief', 'adherence', or 'acceptance' all involve taking a stand, and this in turn involves the rejection of positions not believed, not adhered to, etc. The word 'allegiance' on the other hand I have taken to indicate something rather different. No doubt an element of response to something possessing authority can be taken as built-in to the former set of terms. Allegiance specifically I take to involve a combination of 'allying oneself with', 'respect', 'admiration', 'reliance on', which is not exclusive, but which is capable of extension and addition

such that no contradiction or inconsistency or even emotional incompatibility comes into it. This seems to me to characterize the religious consciousness evidenced in the diverse 'iconography' of the puja room – that aspect which struck Raja Rammohun Roy and the early missionaries alike[2] as the least congenial aspect of Hinduism.

We have here also, it seems to me, a further example of the expansion of concepts operative at the human level (respect for '*gurujan*', admiration of charismatic characters, etc.) so that they acquire a religious dimension or at least a quasi-religious dimension. This capacity for expansion can take its place beside the analogical path familiar in Christian thinking, as something idiosyncratic of Indian religious consciousness. The common feature I have in mind is the reaching out from a human or 'natural' base to the spiritual dimension, but here a reaching out which is expressed neither in the formalized strategies of argument nor in less overtly intellectualist forms of symbolization.

The diversified inconography of the puja room and middle-class patronage of contemporary religious cults alike illustrate what I call the phenomenon of multiple allegiance. This seems not only to be a more precise concept than that of tolerance, but moreover to be quite distinct from the latter. It also needs to be distinguished from (i) ecumenical 'outreaches' in Christendom, (ii) evidences of fertilizing influences from the Indian philosophico-religious corpus of concepts in recent Christian theologizing in India, and (iii) the synthetic (I use the word in the Kantian sense) theologizing which in Sikhism brings together strands in Hindu and Islamic thought.

The phenomenon of multiple allegiance illustrates how religious life proliferates in the attempt to satisfy human needs, say, the need for frequent congregational participation apart from the calendar of festivals, or for a more personalized spiritual direction (cf. the types of questions put to Krishnamurti at his meetings). Such developments cannot be classified as rational or irrational. They grow out of new situations, for example, urban loneliness, or a retreat from politicization. Some of the new cults, moreover, show an interesting shift from the classical concern with liberation to a quest for meaning (or meaningfulness) in life. The phenomenon of multiple allegiance in Hindu religious life, whenever this occurs, (and it is not a widespread phenomenon), may even serve as a useful brake on fundamentalism, and in this respect, in lifeworlds where it is present, it might be considered to have some positive ethical value.

NOTES

1 For the sake of simplicity and to make the contrast more marked I have only taken into account Christian communities *outside* India.

2 In their eyes it smacked of the deplorable latitudinarianism of the Athenians!

Chapter 8

Pluralism and Multicultural Worlds

When Nathan Glazer wrote his book *We are All Multiculturalists Now*[1] some may have thought he was overstating the case, for a large number of people want to protect their own quiddity or the quiddity of their own kind. Do we always know what or who we are? Take the following incident. Mr X, who lives in a small Indian town, goes to consult a homeopath about a health problem. The doctor, having embarked on the series of questions homeopaths ask, poses this teaser: "Well, let me ask you one thing: At night do you dream that a tiger chases you?" Mr. X is taken aback, for he has come to consult the doctor about his earache. "No", he replies. "I have no such dreams". "Ah", retorts the doctor. "You do actually have the dream but don't realize you've had it".

I leave to one side whether this was a sensible or even a relevant question to ask, but only seize on the point that individuals, and even societies, can exhibit symptoms to others that they are unaware of themselves. The diverse cargoes that we willy nilly carry – parental heritages, the influences stemming from friends, teachers, reading, travel, and the sedimentation of day to day experiences – not only give us entry into the lives of others, but in other ways, too, add to the richness and complexity of our lives. Watch the village woman pick up fallen grains of rice from the mud floor. She inherits hands that remember famine. The tortoise carries his house, as Milinda[2] was told. We carry, not houses, but multiple cargoes. Today's multicultural circumstances situate us in complexity. Disentangle the threads if you can (to change the metaphor), and this is not easy, and you find many-coloured pluralities, cosmic in their dimensions. We call out in dismay, or in triumph, depending on our temperament: "Is that who I am?" or, more wisely, "Is that who we are?" In so saying, we are already tossed into the thickets of the problem of identity. Like Caliban, we hear many voices on our island, for island it still is, and, like poor Caliban, we are afraid.

In other words, we have travelled some distance from the way William James sees the discourse of pluralism, or, maybe, we might find we are not so distant after all. For William James, the pluralist banner is unfurled in order to combat the threat of a block universe. For 'block universe,' read today 'authoritarian government,' and we are with James a considerable part of the way. To take one's stand on quiddity, on being what one is and not something else, is surely intrinsic to liberal democracy. Each man's voice, each vote, is intrinsic to what democracy is about. Each person's opinion is of value because each *person* is of value. It is this intrinsic importance, expanding like a many splendoured kite in the wind, that gives you the self-identity, the confident muchness, and suchness, of a Walt Whitman. So it looks as if individuality takes root in nationality. It would be a pity to find ourselves hostages to the nation-state all over again, having started off with pluralistic protest.

We are of one mind in prizing particularity, with William James, but we want to be able to avoid both the anonymity, the loneliness of the crowd, and the steel frame of monolithic structures, be they states or centres of power on a smaller scale. James' link between pluralism and pragmatism was well made, but hobgoblins lurked in the wings. Deep diversity or total contingency can frighten. Whenever there has been a lapse into faith in the march of history in totalitarian guise, the price paid by both innocent and guilty participants has been catastrophic. We seem to be left with a daunting contradiction in the twenty-first century, when the human species, should hopefully, have come of age. The contradiction is between the noble legacy of autonomy which is derived from pluralism, and on the other hand, webs of causal relations (non-deterministic ones of course), labyrinths of connection for which there is no Ariadne's thread, constructs of our own devising, and here are some of them: networking in economics when whose benefit will accrue is carefully hidden, spatiotemporal determinations, environmental traps which might spring earlier than anticipated, neurobiological nexuses, and holistic structures supposed to be therapeutic, but cavernous in their depths. And this is only a sample.

I would later like to ask, before I am through, whether multiculturalism has any role in bridging the gap between our pluralities and the anonymous constructions just listed. And, of course, there are umpteen aporias and disjunctions which I do not intend to take on now. My question might sound wrong-headed, for surely our various political institutions, and especially all the items classifiable under the rubric of 'civil society' are supposed to have precisely that function. I doubt it is as straightforward as this would suggest, for the factor of culture, like some annoyingly criss-crossing element in historical analysis, needs to be given weight, especially the fact that cultures are many, and although some overlap (mercifully, for the sake of peace), not all do. Among the supervening cultures, (let me call them that), two are predominant in the sort of society we live in as a body of concerned individuals seeking to understand our times, privileged as we are, and trying to think out what action is called for (at least I hope that is included). These two are science and liberal democracy. They are also describable as values in that we regard them as good in spite of massive flaws in application and performance. We might, I think, agree that superstition and bigotry, authoritarian government and lack of freedom, rationality and justice, are to be eschewed. But a moment's reflection makes it clear that the benefits of scientific knowledge are not equally available nor is that knowledge always melioristically applied, nor are liberal democracies free from corruption, nepotism, scams, fiddles and the like.

Then it is not enough to give cultures the limited connotation we are used to giving it, for example, taking into account the way that people in different parts of the world live in the various localities of, say, London or New York. Distinctive cultures furthermore, are by no means all brought by immigrants. Anyone living near the Borders, whether of Wales or Scotland, will tell us how distinctive their culture is. It is also essential to bear in mind that those who are at the bottom of the pile economically also have a culture, one bound up with deprivation. It is very familiar to those condemned to it,

but regarding which those unfamiliar with it and suddenly pitchforked into it through a reverse in fortune, would have to *learn* in order to survive. We exist in a thoroughly unequal society. Cultures are the outcome of circumstances, interactions, and growth. Circumstance can include rank neglect, as in the case of the socially excluded, the wretched of the earth who are often dubbed as having no culture, as being of no account. This is the culture of victimhood, the extreme form of which was seen in Belsen and Buchenwald. If we but recognized it, the same phenomenon is writ large among the ragpickers of the smoking refuse dumps on the fringes of third world cities. Their fate is cast amidst the used and the discarded. Living among trash, they themselves have been trashed. I mention this, since there has been a tendency to think of 'culture' as a 'pro' word, but, of course, outside the ranks of professional anthropologists.

Let me next give three different examples of the interactive basis of culture and therefore also of multicultural phenomena. We shall retain the notion of identity, but stress that identities are on the move, and that, as Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out, differences thereby become displaced and transformed. In multicultural societies both of the following take place – processes of negotiation and renegotiation, and pockets of resistance. My examples, I think, illustrate each of these. A few years ago, there was a surprising joint celebration of Guy Fawkes Day and Divali in some British parks, coincidence of dates making this feasible, and giving some bright spark an innovative idea. It was reported in the press along with photos of the occasion. Happily no objections were raised then or later. If any did not wish to participate they sensibly kept away. The current generation of school children is not very likely to have known much about the fifth of November except in the context of collecting "funds", and so their position would not have been very different from that of the Hindu children who shivered together amicably in the cold as they watched the rockets shoot up. The more thoughtful may have looked upon the 'guys' carted around as the British mini version of Ravana. No one knows what any Sri Lankans may have thought. At any rate all were in a mood of celebration. The 'accommodation' that took place was also a sensible economy measure in that expenses could be shared. One could analyse the whole show from the angle of how much 'sharing' of experience there actually was and what account was given to their parents afterwards, but of such analyses there is no end, and if they shared the sweets that was more than enough.

But here is an incident of another kind which also took place on November 5 in a community largely Christian, but in which other communities were also represented. Nearly everyone was out in the back garden enjoying the bonfire which helped to get rid of accumulated garden rubbish. On the top sat a 'guy' duly attired in cast-offs with a realistic cigar in the form of a squib. But in the community lounge, sitting by himself, and rocking to and fro in his grief, was a first generation Jewish member of the group whose grandparents had perished in the Holocaust, and for whom fire had terrible associations. It should also be added that he was a convert, in training to become a Catholic priest. He wanted to know how British people, living in a liberal

country, could celebrate what he saw as directly linked to religious persecution. He was not comforted by an explanation which referred to the vagaries of popular culture, for knowing something about no-Popery campaigns in earlier centuries in Britain, he 'read the signs' in a phenomenon which he found infinitely disturbing. An analysis of this particular example would lead in several directions. But the point is that what to those in the tradition was both ludicrous and enjoyable ('Isn't that So and So's old scarf round the guy's neck?'), had layers of frightening meaning for someone who saw it in a different way. Celebrations are culture-specific. A bonfire, one of the foremost Indian writers of the century once told me, invariably recalls cremation, the slowly smouldering fires scattered along the riverbanks after darkness falls. This is not just a matter of association of ideas. The 'meanings' of archetypal experiences run deep and saturate multiple layers of consciousness, no matter how multicultural a society may purport to be.

The next example is of a different kind. A young female Indian college lecturer, recently married, comes to her head of department and reports the following,. As a new bride in her mother-in-law's house, she is required to dress in her finery for a certain number of weeks, even at her place of work. The honour and standing (*izzat*) of the family requires this. However, as a result, she has become the object of unwelcome attention from a certain senior male colleague in her common room. If she alienates him, she may not be confirmed in her job. Modernity in the form of employment of women, and the collegiality and competition this involves, is emblematic of a culture which runs counter to the culture to which, as a married woman in a lower middle class Hindu household, she must conform. The multicultural situation in this case calls for accommodations to be thought through in a single individual who embodies in herself the intersection of conflicting ways of life. No doubt accommodations were called for by others in this particular scenario.

I deliberately chose examples of different kinds in an attempt to pinpoint the complexity of our theme. In the first, the Guy Fawkes / Divali juxtaposition amounts to what seems to be a welcome accommodation. Without flogging this slender situation to death, we notice here the partial deterritorialization of culture brought about through migration. Who has made the greater shift, or is that an inappropriate question? The Guy Fawkes children are on their own territory to be sure. But let us say that the Punjabi/Gujarati children are already second generation immigrants. They too are Britishers, speaking with the same twang as the others, and would be indignant to be called anything else, although, like their seniors, they often slip into the 'we' of an earlier belonging – 'This is what we do when we celebrate Divali'. Importantly, I think, these are *children* who are taking part. No doubt escorting parents stand on the fringes, ready to take their children home. Has embeddedness been challenged in some simple way, and a new embeddedness initiated? To say this might be to go a bit too far. But something has happened which would not have happened fifty years ago. Good memories can accumulate over time, and new histories be written.

In my second example, also a November 5th occurrence, harrowing memories haunt a single individual. Histories that traverse generations intersect painfully. Here plurality shows itself in the isolation of the one who does not belong – not here – perhaps nowhere. The separate meanings that jostle in consciousness are all so unequal – the triviality of the bonfire/fireworks situation, the never to be forgotten journey of the grandparents to the place of extinction, the conflictual nexus of original religious affiliation and the new allegiance being agonizingly worked out.

Identities are fluid, so we are told these days. But there is something else to be taken into account – not only being plural, but being differently plural. In each complexly structured history – let us substitute histories for essences or selves – there is a fine line between what can be shared and what cannot. The multicultural situation impinges on embodied histories which are verbalized only in part and that with difficulty. Most often, all that happens is a lapse into 'juxtaposed monologues,'[3] in Jacob Neusner's vivid phrase. Can we talk unless there is a community of shared experience, a plenum within which each can turn to the other? This 'turning' is crucial. I am not just curious. I don't just want to hear an interesting story. So do we work on creating that plenum and, if so, how? Neighbours already know how, or rather good neighbours know how (Don't remind me that it was the neighbours next door, such good neighbours all these years, that gave my grandparents' whereabouts away). What would *tikkun* involve in the second example?[4] To say 'Put the past behind you' will not do, because this is precisely what the Guy Fawkes celebrators are not doing.

Let us begin again. We can be *moved* when understanding and sharing fail. The injunction is to weep with those that weep, not to try and argue them out of their sorrow. And yet both euphoria and lamentation can notoriously collapse into hostility, stone-throwing and other forms of violence. When Kant criticized the *Schwärmerei* of the eighteenth century Pietists, and Advaitins looked askance at Vaishnavas, they did not have in mind the possibility of violence, but rather the essential volatility of the emotions. Gandhi believed that the heart could be moved by others' suffering when that suffering was undertaken voluntarily, in the special way of resisting evil non-violently that he called *satyagraha*. This can happen with an 'adversary' of a certain kind. The last century and the first years of this century witness the impassiveness of those who are well aware of others' suffering. The first chapter of Michael Ignatieff's *The Needs of Strangers*[5] describes what he sees outside his own front door, the sight of down-and-outs of many nationalities, including residents (except that they have 'no fixed abode') picking over discarded clothes, utensils, and scraps of food. The needs of strangers in this multicultured mix are met as little as are the needs of the socially excluded locals. Returning to my second example, what *tikkun* can there be for the evils of the past? When all is explained, nothing is explained. The survivor can find no consolation as he remembers the deaths of the innocent.

My third example was yet again different. The many cultures which the young lecturer is expected to embody impose the burden that belongs to

those living in societies in transition, especially in the way this affects gender issues in the two-thirds world. The example can serve to shift attention from the more usual context in which multiculturalism is discussed, that is, in terms of the impinging of 'alien' ways of life on a relatively stable society and economy, and the strains and stresses this causes for all. Enough has been said to show that the individual is the locus of many cultures, and, therefore, that identity is no simple matter. Plurality is the ground for a sense of contextuality e.g. place of birth, economic status, genetic inheritance and so on, but has much to do with the otherness within. This needs expansion, but I must leave it at that. Different as the three examples are, they each represent the intersection of personal history with history in its socio-economic and political dimensions. In each, moreover, the multicultural theme is present in some form or other.

It is now time to pick up a thread mentioned earlier in my loom of ideas – the contradiction between our commitment to human autonomy and the networks and labyrinths of our devising. It shows itself in four trends in particular. First, in recent years – and this is a frightening symptom for the democratically minded – public opinion, however strongly expressed, tends not to be heeded. Second, policies of doubtful ethical value are accepted if they succeed, that is, no disquiet is felt if the means-end continuum is ruptured. Third, excessive and slanted media coverage makes for overkill, and this leads to saturation and indifference, and this, in turn, provokes even greater degrees of distortion from the media. Fourth, international bodies designed to curb totalizing agencies such as nation-states, federal bodies and other targets of suspicion, lack teeth, and prove unable to curb powers with economic and military clout, and still less able to curb a super power. Along with this, projects of great pith and moment, especially those concerned with the environment, falter because of lack of back-up from the great and powerful.

What then, will happen to the 'poor, bare, forked animal', as Shakespeare calls the human being? What will happen to the base line, to individual persons, the level of plurality, which 'representation' seems to pass by? The multiculturalists on the lookout for hopeful signs that hitherto unheard voices might be heard, will have to cast their nets far and wide. The voices that stem from what I call the middle ground come from various quarters. The Aga Khan was on a visit to India some time ago in connection with the preservation of an ancient monument. In his public address he stressed the importance of diverse cultural heritages, and that these must be regarded as common heritages which are to be shared. At a time when priceless monuments have been destroyed by new hordes of vandals, his words carried weight. On a different tack, but no less relevant to the intercultural theme, Boutros Boutros Ghali, speaking of the problem of how to tap representative sources of world opinion, suggested that NGOs, cities and multi-nationals should somehow be involved in the process. How exactly this could be done is mind-boggling, but there could have been at least two major motives behind the suggestion. First, there must have been an implicit recognition that international bodies were somehow, and most unfortunately, unable to fulfil the purposes for which they

were instituted. Second, there might be a possible way of envisaging a kind of counterpart, at the trans-national level, of what, in individual countries, goes under the name of 'civil society'. New thinking is most surely needed, including thinking out what the concept of 'international citizenship' could involve, given that, as it stands, it appears to be an oxymoron.

Moving on, I detect a different voice, also to be placed in the middle ground, coming from the communitarians. This lobby, for I think this is what it is, either derives weaponry by critiquing an extreme from of liberalism, or by drawing on anti-Fed impulses (I am speaking of the American form of the theory). The plight of refugees underlines the misery of those who have lost their community. An even older source of the communitarian way of thinking is found in the notion of idealized small rural communities in pre-industrial conditions. The contemporary version usually appropriates the concept of rights from the Enlightenment basket of ideas, insisting that there is such a thing as 'collective rights'. In this manner, a concept belonging to the language of individuality is extrapolated to collectives. The problem is that groups embedded to the extent that communitarians desire, exemplify the sort of solidarity which is invariably fuelled by a sense of demarcation. This being so, the communitarian finds it difficult to accommodate the multicultural idea, for this requires removing the boundary between 'us' and 'them'. The concept of 'community of communities' publicized by Martin Buber, in his lectures to kibbutzniks and others, was a bold idea and very suited to a population growing through successive waves of immigration. Amitai Etzioni was Buber's pupil at one time. However, rethought in American conditions – and this is what Etzioni does – the communitarian thesis has an unmistakable anti-Fed flavour. The nostalgia felt for early pioneering communities (usually fortified by the fervour of sectarian beliefs brought from the 'old world') is also fed by a reaction to the pulverized life of the cities, the rat race of the megapolis. The communitarian tends to be conservative, idealizing a past when sections of the population – Blacks, indigenous people, Jews, women, strangers and any who were conspicuously outsiders – hardly fared well.

The notion of 'collective rights', moreover, raises question marks. A strong case 'Against collective rights' is formulated by Yael Tamir[6] from the Department of Philosophy, Tel Aviv University. She points out that supporters of collective rights reckon they aim to safeguard individuals against assimilation, conversion, language transformation and attempts to 'reform' the tradition. The last of these is seen as capitulation to the dominant culture. Here the collective rights advocate shows his true colours. The anti-reformist sees traditions as under siege and, as such, regards traditions as static, to be handed on to the next generation in a pristine form. Leaders of traditionalist communities, and this will include *haredim* and fundamentalist Muslims, are oppressive vis-à-vis their own dissidents. They are almost invariably oppressive towards women, and to this extent hardly represent their own collective, leaving out of account a large proportion of their number. The irony is this. Protesting against the tyranny of the majority, your extremist lobby tyrannizes some of its own people. A criticism can also be made of using a notion

of inter-generational solidarity of past, present and future generations in order to block change. One can recall many an occasion when a respected senior member of a community known for its ancient lineage has had occasion to exclaim : 'If only my grandmother were alive to see this day'.

If ethical problems arise vis à vis hidebound collectivities this is no less the case if we consider multicultural societies, and to these I now turn. A harmonious multicultural society, I assume, is one in which no single component regards itself as superior to another. It would be unrealistic not to admit that this is an extremely difficult requirement. Among other things, we are presupposing two attitudes which are dependent on education and habits sedimented as an outcome of prevailing culture of a certain kind. These two attitudes are, first of all, a mindset disposed to hail commonalities rather than single out differences, and second, a willingness to concede that there are many forms of good life. That such attitudes have a bearing on the possibility of inter-religious harmony will, I think, be patent.

Also related to the issue of inter-religious harmony is the ethical problem of how much weight to give to sentiment. This poses teasers for policy makers, and I give some examples. Here is a small town in which the throwing of ashes (after cremation) into the river, something introduced by newcomers, is causing dismay to the City Fathers. Ruling that this is a cognizable offence will cause alarm and despondency, if not worse. The same body of worthies is also facing protests about a certain slaughter house. Let us pile it on. The municipal agenda also contains reports from local doctors about the number of cases of septicaemia in young Sudanese women as a result of botched female circumcision. The local authority has to take into account existing policies regarding health, and the feasibility of making rulings that might cause disturbance of the peace. It looks as if, whatever distress be caused by running against the sentiments of some, especially when these are tied up with religion, to say that 'such and such is part of their culture', does not, *ipso facto, validate* a particular custom. The three examples I have cited are currently much in the public eye in some parts of Britain. Similar problems can arise among the 'locals' (I use this tendentious word for the sake of argument. *All* are actually 'locals'). Here is a parent of a child belonging to a family of Jehovah's Witnesses who refuses to give permission for the child to have a life-giving blood transfusion. The courts in Britain to date, as far as I know, have ruled in favour of the parent. In the USA this matter might perhaps vary from state to state. The thing is that, whereas in the case of headhunters, there seems no difficulty about ruling out reference to their sentiments, in other contexts it might not be at all easy to adjudicate between the options. The can of worms includes such questions as who is to decide, with whom to parley, how to keep the peace, how to enforce the ruling made, and so on.

Let us take another question. Put baldly it is this. How are we to distinguish between disliking, disapproving, condemning and just having a gut reaction? Here is a family from Trinidad having a party next door. The doors and windows are all open and the decibels mount. At home they would have had the party in the open air. These are flats, and there is no garden.

How much should neighbours tolerate? Susie has her exam tomorrow and I have to prepare my lecture. Mary Warnock has suggested that disliking and disapproving are to be distinguished since disapproval has grounds. But what about the horrendously loud music next door? I dislike it thoroughly and I can tell you why. I have grounds. Now 'toleration' is not necessarily a 'pro' word. There are many things we should not tolerate: persecution, for example. Is tolerating litter unethical/a matter of poor taste/turning a blind eye out of sheer laziness? Or is *causing* litter worse than tolerating litter?

Here is another puzzle. There is a tendency these days to take culture as rockbottom (Wittgenstein might have something to do with this if philosophers are in the picture), but it is a position hard to defend. Cultures constantly change. An interesting ethical question can be posed. Is there such a thing as an *obligation* to retain distinctiveness? Your conservative will say that there is. Are all cultures worth preserving? Just as there can be selective appropriation, should there not be selective retention? One consequence of the incomplete deterritorialization of culture brought about by migration is the backward glance at circumstances left behind in spite of the probability that you were very relieved to get away. The situations faced by diasporas vary enormously, but this is a topic for another occasion.

Multicultural worlds are worlds in which constant accommodation is called for. Assimilation, water-tight compartments, mosaics, salad-bowls, hodge podge – are all types of accommodation, and, taking different countries into account, we notice great variety. The pressure to conform is more in some places than in others. Appearance, behaviour, and speech can be subtly modified/incongruously copied/deliberately kept in their original form in affirmation of so-called ethnic identity. This apart, and parallel to the fumbling efforts to create an institutional framework for peaceful international relations, there is a groundswell of people to people encounters in the sportsfield, committee room, academic conference, concert hall, market place, school and distant places where young people choose to do useful work alongside those they have never heard of before. Lifeworlds take time in the making, and multicultural worlds take even longer, but the struggle availeth much. In any case it is good to have a pole-star to navigate by.

NOTES

1 Nathan Glazer, *We are all multiculturalists now*, Harvard University Press, 1997.

2 *Milindapanha* (Pali), Sacred Books of the East.

3 Jacob Neusner, *Telling Tales : Making Sense of Christian and Judaic Nonsense*, Westminster/ John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1993, p.5.

4 *Tikkun* (Heb.), means 'mending' as in E. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*, Schocken, New York, 1982.

5 M. Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers*, Vintage, London, 1994.

6 Yael Tamir, *Multicultural Questions*, eds. Christian Joppke and Steven Lukes, OUP, 1999, pp.158-180.

Chapter 9

The Viability of Nonviolence in Collective Life

The theme that first suggested itself to me ran like this: "The viability of nonviolence in a Hobbesian world". I then began to wonder if we do in fact live in a Hobbesian world and decided to modify the title accordingly. Even as it stands now, my wicket is sticky, indeed. It may seem almost impossible to avoid rhetoric on the one hand and ideology on the other. Of course, a case might be made for nonpejorative uses of each of these. The persuasive element in speech is surely invoked by us all whenever we use arguments. Moreover, there is surely an innocuous sense in which all thinking about politics and morals moves within a formative framework of ideas. Bearing this in mind, I shall seek to be reasonably persuasive and deploy my nonviolent forces, such as they are, as innocuously as I can.

I begin with a quick look at what Hobbes says about human nature, for so much of it reflects contemporary ways of thinking:

> For there is *no* such thing as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense[1].

Human desires are difficult to curb, and we seem to be inexorably impelled by mechanisms within ourselves. So far, one might almost be listening to a Buddhist Jeremiah, were such an oddity possible. But unlike the Buddha or Patanjali or the author of the *Gita*, Hobbes does not think the attainment of perpetual tranquility of mind is possible, although the careful addition of the word "perpetual" suggests there might be occasional respites, analogous presumably to the way in which bodies can be momentarily at rest while forces do not actually impinge on them. The moral Hobbes draws is that, since human life is so precarious, it is incumbent on the state to preserve life:

> considering what values men are naturally apt to set upon themselves; what respect they look for from others; and how little they value other men; from whence continually arise amongst them, Emulation, Quarrells, Factions, and at last Warre, to the destroying of one another, and diminution of their strength against a common Enemy (chap. 18, p.139).

The way in which Hobbes links the whole argument in *Leviathan* to his "groundwork" analysis of human nature reflects the approach to human studies that extrapolates from the individual to the collective. This approach, however, is not much favored today. While critics of the organic theory of society or of the state did a great deal to undermine the analogy, a more basic

question mark still attends how we understand human nature in the first place. While the retreating sea of faith may seem to take away with it a sense of radical iniquity, it may no less surely wash away the hope of redemption. In any case, I am not altogether sure that the sea of faith is retreating as much as some fear. But that is a theme for another day. Modern man is more likely to opt for a faith midway between Augustinianism and millennialist thinking. The concept of nonviolence probably belongs precisely here, as I shall try to show, enabling us to avoid too Hobbesian a view of human nature on the one hand, and too rosy-eyed a picture of the feasible on the other.

But how Hobbesian can we be said to be, situated as we are in the first quarter of the twenty-first century? I refer now to our contemporary *Lebenswelt*. Hobbes's arguments in favor of government seem to point to the need for an international government. In the absence of such a government, anarchy is bound to prevail. But the extrapolation from the individual to the state and from the state to *inter*state relations becomes vulnerable at this point. What we find may not be a war of all against all, but a war of some against others, and this, of course, can show itself in more than one geographical region. I refer to the phenomenon of multiple isolated conflicts. Since Hobbes's time we are, moreover, familiar with the formation of blocs – another factor that could be said to mitigate the condition of a free-for-all state of anarchy. Furthermore, we now have a modicum of international bodies that mediate between governments, and also a corpus of international law. And yet, in spite of what appear as mitigating factors, the hard fact remains that now we live with the possibility of something worse than the anarchy that Hobbes envisaged for the single nation, the possibility of total destruction, something that is genuinely in the cards by virtue of the nature of modern weaponry. In other words, we now have a changed prospect of calamity beyond the confines of civil strife. The need for curbing national sovereignties and the structuring of international machinery for regulating the intercourse of states are all matters that Hobbes could not possibly anticipate.

We might at this point venture a little further in assessing whence we have come. While we may wish to modify in some ways the seventeenth-century mechanical model that Hobbes took for granted – I think here of quantum mechanics on the one hand and the apparently aleatory character of much of human affairs on the other – the fact remains that the element of *momentum* is still with us, most notably in the sphere of technological advance and economic life. Hobbes's apprehension of things going out of control has fresh warrant. Both of these types of momentum, in technology and in economics (and no doubt they are closely related), may serve to undermine contractual obligations. The twentieth century steeple-chase is strewn with not one, but several, scraps of paper.

We are familiar now with looking upon the state as an institution that can do either right or wrong but most often deploys itself in the grey area in between. Rebellion and revolt are now legitimized under conditions of the abuse of power, and in fact, it is in the context of the resistance against authority that the whole history of nonviolent political activity grew up.

The force of public opinion in democratic societies is one of the most hopeful factors that has developed since Hobbes's time. But this force is to be distinguished from the actions of the demos conceived as a mob, a demarcation that the concept of nonviolence can help to make clear. The health of a democracy, moreover, owes much to the voluntary institutions that are intermediate between the individual and the state, and it is these voluntary associations that have, since the seventeenth century, especially in the religious sphere, evolved techniques of nonviolent protest. In this connection, the role of nonconformist sects and organizations on both sides of the Atlantic is of historic importance. It would not be possible to overemphasize the contribution of this important stream of thought to the ethos of the founding fathers of the American Constitution. The concept of nonviolence jumped continents and centuries and surfaced in Gandhi's labors in South Africa and crossed the Atlantic once more, surfacing in Martin Luther King's work[2]. At its core lay a sturdy belief in the individual, a conception of human rights based on all that is inalienable in man, and, at the same time, a no less firm belief in the importance of *congregations* as foci of powers that exceed the combined individual strengths of their members. Such congregations acted as a leaven in society and, I venture to suggest, were arsenals of moral strength in times of civil discord.

What else has happened since Hobbes's time? I believe that the development of transnational associations is a very significant phenomenon to be noted in this regard. So much international contact is neither nasty nor brutish. Frontiers do not always prevent contact between the likeminded (they often do, of course). Ideas travel freely, although information sometimes may not. Contact apart, contemporary experience witnesses to myriad efforts in the pooling of points of view and the sharing of lifeworlds. We should not forget to mention also the way in which states often fund the comings and goings of people such as ourselves, even though the intellectual more often than not plays the role of the critic rather than that of the establishment voice. All such efforts, to my mind, operate as nonmechanical neutralizing forces in a plenum in which nonviolent strategies can well exert a subtle influence on the destabilizing forces in society.

That a word like "destabilizing" should come to mind is perhaps significant. When Hobbes speaks of the "causes of quarrel", of "what disturbs the peace", he seems to presuppose an otherwise peaceful equilibrium on which considerations of competition, diffidence, and glory intrude. But if this is so, it hardly goes along with his initial analysis of human nature with its pushes and pulls of desire and aversion. The fact seems to be that human nature contains many contrary elements, some working toward tranquility and some working toward its opposite. It makes a difference, I suspect, whether we conceive the latter as restlessness per se, or as the sort of negativities/deadly sins frowned on in most religious traditions. A not-so-divine discontent may not be a bad thing, I tend to think, especially if it serves as the spur to a bettering of the human condition. But can a term like nonviolence cover both the idea of tranquility and the dynamism that a meliorist outlook requires? I shall explore this

question next, assuming that we are now exploring a very different thought-world from that of Hobbes, but one that is strongly represented in the history of dissent, the framework of ideas that crossed the Atlantic and was eventually encapsulated in the lifeworld of the founding fathers of the American Constitution.

The ethic of nonviolence was carved out in the context of *resistance* to authority, and not, as in the case of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, in the context of the *legitimation* of authority. Looking at the history of nonviolent struggles in modern times, the following characteristics emerge. The protagonist of nonviolence is committed to an ethic of both responsibility and perfection, thereby combining categories that Max Weber distinguished. The ethic seems to cut across religious demarcations, although I myself find it, historically, present most of all in nonconformism. The nonviolent protagonist is committed to a gradual domestic decentralization of power, a decentralization that will – it is hoped – eventually obviate the necessity for a centralized political power (and that will, in any case, tolerate with difficulty the "individuality" of separate congregations), a power that certainly in modern times is bound to augment itself beyond national boundaries. This augmentation is evidenced amply by the way the market economy leads to colonialism and its latest counterparts in terms of spheres of influence, and so on. The protagonist of nonviolence propounds a logic of total peace that is the counterpart of the logic of total war. The latter is admittedly clearer to define, that is, a state of war in which, with the introduction of aerial bombardment, there is no distinction between the homefront and the battlelines. The advocates of nonviolence shift from considerations of space, that is to say, rival territorialities, to time, in the sense that only a logic of total peace can offer a viable future, or more simply, can hold out the prospect of survival. They aim not merely at a limitation of hostilities but at their dissolution.

Nonviolent resistance parallels "the rules of war" with its own rules. These include preparatory training to inculcate discipline; a prior exhausting of all other peaceful alternatives, such as petitions, negotiations, press campaigns; a staged embarking on nonviolent campaigns (illustrated, for example, in Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns or in the civil rights movement in the United States); and, within each campaign, selective targeting. Nonviolence has been used both by individuals and by collectivities. But in each case it is a last resort, when all other possibilities have been tried and found wanting. Those who are committed to nonviolence believe that therein lies a method of resisting subjugation without killing, that nonviolence does not itself incorporate any aggressive element. The psychological component of all this must not be missed. Nonviolent resistance is a method of overcoming a sense of helplessness. It shows what can be done by the humblest citizens in situations where the state power is heavily loaded against them.

Nonviolence as a policy clearly involves commitment to the use of an alternative weaponry, commitment to the moral equivalent of warfare. This expression was used by both William James and Gandhi, and I would like to recall the context in which, first of all, James used it. The year was 1906, and

William James arrived in San Francisco booked to teach at Stanford from January until mid-May. His famous speech on "the moral equivalent of war" was delivered on 25 February to the assembly of the entire university, although it was not published until 1910. He proclaimed:

> We inherit the warlike type; and for most of the capacities of heroism that the human race is full of we have to thank this cruel history[3].

He did not, however, want to lose the warlike virtues of "intrepidity, contempt of softness, surrender of public interest, obedience to command."[4] The remedy was to find "moral equivalents," such as the conquest of nature or building a better society. He envisaged a canalizing of aggressive impulses and stoic attitudes of mind into "useful" attitudes. The possibility of taming nature might have received a setback in his mind when he witnessed an earthquake some months later and saw San Francisco in a shambles. But in an article written some weeks after the quake, he observed how the catastrophe had brought out the best in people, suppressing their selfishness and throwing up spontaneous leaders.[5] Putting together his experience of the earthquake and what Lutoslawski had written to him about Yoga, he subsequently explored the notion that most people have untapped energies that show themselves in times of calamity or when their willpower is called upon in an unusually demanding situation:

> We need a topography of the limits of human power, similar to the chart which oculists use of the field of human vision. We need also a study of the various types of human being with reference to the different ways in which their energy-reserves may be appealed to and set loose.[6]

James's scientific outlook inspired an objective analysis that was singularly free from moralizing. It may be worthwhile setting this analysis alongside the views of two other thinkers for whom the sense of human imperfection was more pronounced. James Madison wrote:

> As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust; so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form.[7]

Madison's use of the term "distrust" compares in an intriguing way with Hobbes's use of the word "diffidence" and links up, moreover, with the contemporary use of diffidence in the connotation of self-doubt.

Gandhi's analysis resembles James's and Madison's in varying degrees, although the overall picture he gives has its own characteristic contours. Looking back on his experiences in South Africa, he used the phrase "the moral equivalent of war" in an article in *Young India* of 5 November 1931. I am told that Gandhi knew a Bengali student who had audited William James's lectures at Harvard but have not been able to verify this, and in any case, James's famous lecture was delivered at Stanford and not at Harvard. The point, however, is that while Gandhi, like James, advocated a canalization of human aggressiveness, he thought this could be done most effectively through a technique of collective action he called *satyagraha*. Gandhi, moreover, did not think poorly of what others dubbed "monkish virtues", believing that collectivity needed to be leavened by qualities such as gentleness, forbearance, and the virtues listed in 1 Corinthians 13. That the path of nonviolence is the path of suffering was stressed by Gandhi again and again. As he wrote in the *Young India* article:

> Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle. But suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason[8].

Gandhi found that nonviolent resistance was a method that could be used not only by individuals but by collectivities: "It is a profound error to suppose that whilst the law [of life, nonviolence,] is good enough for individuals it is not for masses of mankind".[9] He was, moreover, well aware of the perfectionist bias in his own thinking but thought it vitally important to match the mechanistic analyses of man and society by an affirmation of a built-in teleology of the spirit that worked not only against the determinisms that dog us but against inertness, an Indian concept that can perhaps be set alongside the notion of acedia[10].

Before we proceed to the nitty-gritty, let us see what Gandhi's advocacy of nonviolence as a tool for collective use amounts to in political terms. It seems to me that conceptually the ruling out of violence provides a ground of federation. But, as such, it provides a transcendental condition of an unusual kind. It provides a presuppositional framework for the neutralizing of a whole package of negativities – mistrust, unease, malaise, ignorance, misinformation, and misunderstanding. In calling it a "ground," I would like to point to its noncontractual character per se, but I would also suggest that it can be fertile for contracts, and not only for contracts, but for diverse forms of association and inventive social structures. If a nonviolent *Bewusstseinslage* is formal-material in nature, as seems to be the case, it can generate something midway between a *Gesinnungsethik* and an *Erfolgsethik*. If this were not the case, we should indeed be guilty of the sheerest rhetoric in discoursing on nonviolence. In terms of political policy, as distinct from philosophical structure, nonviolence involves the following elements. First of all, it hinges on a radical pluralism that in James's case derived from the empiricist tradi-

tion and, in Gandhi's, from Jainism. The nonviolent protagonist tries to "neutralize" causes of quarrel, tackling economic and other grievances and at the same time embarking on what Gandhi called constructive work. This amounts to attacking areas of darkness in one's own backyard, a discipline reckoned to make the agents realize that all the darkness is not in the other camp. Gandhi, moreover, sees nonviolence involving the individual in the democratic process in a way that representative government by itself fails to do. A nonviolent strategy agreed on by a group resembles strategies stemming from covenant relationships in that is carried out "in the presence of" some larger concern – in this case, in the presence of the public, a public that these days spans frontiers. Gandhi himself attached great importance to the lack of secrecy that attended his campaigns. On reflection one finds that the need for secrecy is connected most of all with defense, that is to say, with situations where the type and quantum of weaponry is crucial. One can also see how the necessary withholding of information that goes along with military strategy heightens a sense of "something going on behind the scenes," of "deals being made," and so on, all of which distance the electorate from the decision-makers.

As far as Gandhi was concerned, the supporting ethos that went along with nonviolence as a regulating principle, both within the state and between states, carried with it a stringent critique of technological civilization, on the grounds that the latter inevitably augments power at the center, thereby increasing the likelihood of conflict with others. Nonviolent protagonists believe that violence is never civilized, and so they exclude familiar concepts like "the just war," "limited conflicts," and "deterrents." They take an idiosyncratic view of success and failure, measuring success by collective well-being, where this is understood as involving both *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. That this is conceived as going beyond frontiers is made clear in Gandhi's "oceanic circle" model of political activity, the individual being at the center, but with increasing areas of involvement, there being no limit to the concentric circles generated by corporate activities. This could be contrasted with Clausewitz's understanding of war as in essence the clash of collective wills. On the oceanic circle model, there would be an expanding collective will for peace. Instead of competition, there would be a pooling of resources; instead of diffidence, trust; and instead of glory, value set on the welfare of the humblest of citizens. Gandhi did not work out in detail what kind of institutional framework all this would involve, but he was firm about the need to minimize state activity and about the importance of voluntary organizations as tools for mobilizing collectivities. In this respect, he was particularly aware of the factors that divide one community from another and the need for encouraging cross-sections of public opinion on issues that involve all in common. Above all, the nonviolent resource of resistance to authority, when abused, would give the community a sense of control over its own destiny, something that lies at the very core of the meaning of democracy.

We now come finally to the nitty-gritty problems arising in our minds, all those factors that tend to make us distrustful of what appears to be an ethic of perfectionism if not an ostrichlike disregard of political realities.

The first difficulty arises over the extrapolation of what may be an admirable *Gesinnungsethik* for individuals into a policy for collectivities. I have already suggested that even at the individual level nonviolence is rather more than an "ethic of motive." It seems to bear a formal-material character if we examine the situations in which this counterforce has been deployed in many parts of the globe. As for the extrapolation from the individual to collectivities, and even more, from individuals to states, there are admittedly many nonparallels; for example, individuals may not imprison, compel obedience to rules, or declare war.

One may next ask whether nonviolent protagonists have fully understood the nature of the state, or whether, perhaps, they have understood it all too well. They see the state as essentially a focus of power, possessing a built-in violence that expresses itself, for example, in policing and taxing functions, and against which, even when the government is representative, individuals may often find themselves arrayed. In this connection, Gandhi himself said on many an occasion that it was impossible to defend by nonviolence what has been gained by violence. Following this argument through, it follows that states cannot pursue a policy of nonviolence. We seem to be driven to this conclusion *malgré nous*. But are there any itigating factors to take the sting out of this conclusion? I think there are.

First, the machinery of representative government, with its attendant checks and balances, along with the attendant network of associations that bridge the gap between the individual and the center, provides, or should provide, avenues for the expression of the will of the people. Second, the evolution of political institutions in the free world has made of states today (I hope I am not too optimistic about this) not only foci of power but in some sense vehicles of culture. We come back at this point to the old, but not out of date, concept of ethos, which takes a recognizable *national* shape and which, in countries with constitutions, is reflected, often paradigmatically, therein. It will always be good for the state to have critics, and this is where the nonviolent strategies of collectivities, those intermediate bodies of whose importance Rousseau was so convinced, can exert an invaluable influence on public policy. The moralizing of politics, to my mind, can only take place in this apparently roundabout way, but it is a way that makes the people themselves, rather than any other agency, the guardians. If such a degree of participation, whether by way of criticism or cooperation, were truly operative, it would be possible to say that citizens were *responsible* for the acts of their governments.

Let us raise a further question. Are there duties across frontiers? Do leaders not have a prime duty to their own people? Contemporary moral sensitivity, in many quarters, recognizes the reprehensibility of "letting die," just as it intuits something very wrong in damaging the genetic structure of the unborn. These new sensitivities in our own time, to my mind, serve to foster an awareness of duty beyond national boundaries. The adherent of nonviolence, one might venture to say, is more likely to detect the concomitant but unintended violence to others involved in policies that do not eschew military

alternatives. Contemporary "diffidence," it seems to me, is not grounded on skepticism concerning knowledge, but on fundamental uncertainties, especially regarding "what the others may do first."

In our own day, and this is where we differ from Hobbes and his contemporaries, we are haunted not so much by the threat of civil war as by the possibility of a flying apart at the seams stemming from ethnic diversity, regional disparities, urban guerilla activity, and terrorism. While these challenge the body politic, their impact cuts across national boundaries. No matter how excellent a constitution may be, it cannot provide a therapy for them. The therapeutic stance ties in with the philosophic, both requiring a diagnostic eye and generating a search for a way of dealing with the effects set in train by such causal factors. In liberal societies, the diagnostic eye demands a convergence of conscience and consciousness that the founders of the American Constitution believed democracy would foster.

Somewhere along the way, the seventeenth-century intuitions of radical human defect and hope of redemption have been replaced by a complex of attitudes that includes a sense of dismay at the frightening acceleration principle of many processes we have ourselves set in motion. Hobbes would have found this familiar. But the very mechanism of democratic procedures seems to provide saving factors, a means of self-correction that owes as much to individual initiative as it does to collective agency. The concept of resource can provide a valuable antidote to mechanism. And somewhere among the resources is a history of nonviolent ways of bringing about meliorist change, a history that spans frontiers and continents. As Gandhi knew only too well, the potentiality of the moral equivalent of warfare has yet to be fully explored. Let us recall Madison's words:

> ...there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican Government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form.[11]

NOTES

1 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1909, Ch.6, p.48. All references in the text to this work are from this edition. Cf. also Hobbes's *De Homine* in William Molesworth's 1952 edition of the Latin Works, Vol.2, p.103.

2 See James D.Hunt, *Gandhi and The Nonconformists*, Promilla and Co., 1986.

3 Gay Wilson Allen, *William James: A Biography*, Viking Press, New York, 1967, p.451.

4 Ibid.

5 James's article appeared in the *Youth's Companion*.

6 Presidential address, American Philosophical Association, Columbia University, 28 December, 1906.

7 See Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neoconservative*, Allied Publishers, Indian Reprint, New Delhi, 1986, p.82.

8 *Young India*, Ahmedabad, 5 November, 1931, p.341.

9 *Harijan*, Ahmedabad, 5 September, 1936, p.236.

10 For example, the *tamasik* (inert) stands in contrast to the *rajasik* (active) and the *sattvik* (the eternal/true/perfect – an untranslatable ontological category.

11 *Federalist* no.55 in *Federalist Papers*, ed.C. Rossiter, New American Library, New York, 1961, p.346.

Chapter 10

Explicit and Implicit Violence: Does the Distinction Hold?

INTRODUCTION

At first sight it may seem quite obvious that explicit and implicit violence are sharply distinguishable, the simplest example being the explicit violence of war. But it is no less evident that peace–time 'accommodates' not only explicit violence within domestic walls, bullying in schools and the implicit violence dormant, and of course often exploding, in inner cities, to say nothing of the violence that simmers among those living near newly-drawn borders. It could also be said that the distinction between explicit and implicit violence may strike those who have experienced centuries of persecution as particularly inappropriate, for the sequence of pinpricks, insults, restrictions on movement, the imposition of demeaning tasks, and false accusations have all been signposts on the road to policies of torture and deliberate extermination.

The twentieth century has seen the worst brutalities committed in human history. Emerging from this, distinctions between genocide, crimes against humanity, actions deemed legitimate during war and those not legitimate, war as such and preemptive war, peace-keeping forces vis-à-vis armed intervention, have become familiar. Some of the terminology has arisen in the course of identifying war criminals. The tribunals that deal with this are charged with the task of assigning responsibility for torture and death. The range and scale of perpetration is taken into account, as is also the fragmentation of responsibility, whether complicity amounts to guilt, availability and extent of knowledge at the time, including the intervening steps between the issuing of orders and their implementation, and by whom. While adjudication on such matters devolves on national and/or international bodies set up for this purpose, the public is necessarily involved in several ways. For example, the public may insist that the initial trial should be at the national level. Then, after judgement is made, the public may not be satisfied that justice has been done. Behind all this a demand is made for pinning down and making explicit.

Stemming from such procedures, and also in situations where it is thought that authorities have turned a blind eye to further issues calling for judgement, there has been a measure of public response, from time to time, which *might* augur well for the future. Carpet bombing, the greater publicity given by governments to the slaughter of Caucasians as against that of black peoples, the sale of armaments to governments subsequently identified as enemies – all are gradually attracting the adverse comment of politically alert citizens. Even more significant, the comment made is often about peoples not necessarily close at hand but in distant places, about whom journalists,

documentary film makers and eye witnesses have made us aware. Explicit violence shocks.

It might be generally agreed that a whole syllabus of tricky ethical questions is involved in the daily happenings we read about. For example, what criteria are to be used in distinguishing between those whose willingness to die for a particular cause is deemed to be honourable and those, including suicide bombers, we regard as culpable killers? And we do, after all, demarcate commandos, freedom fighters and other patriots from terrorists. Here is another example. We use the phrase "cowboy ethics" disapprovingly, even though at one time the cowboy was presumably looked on as a hero in some quarters. The point is that not only in totalitarian and/or militaristic regimes is there much that needs resisting, but in democracies as well. The problem is that while explicit violence shocks, implicit violence is either not identified at all or looked upon as part of societies' everyday performances. However, it is on the impact of implicit violence on lifeworlds that, for the most part, I wish to focus.

The examples to be mentioned mostly pinpoint the post-Eichmann trial era because my aim is to draw attention to the dire results of inaction, the sinister potential within 'ordinariness'. I should also say that I have been struck by the significant exchange of views that took place between Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem, including the two main issues of the banality of evil thesis and her lack of enthusiasm for Zionism. For what emerged, it seems to me, was the crucial character of *judgement*, a matter which Arendt had much on her mind just before death cut short her trilogy. The third volume on judgement was required not only by the architectonic of her *The Life of the Mind*, but by her mature perception of the realities of political life. Exposure by itself is not enough, and indignation is not enough, for there can be a saturation plateau as knowledge of the horrors perpetrated by human beings on their fellows mounts up. Only a readiness to judge and to act can bring to a halt the unthinkable that is part of the everyday.

The cultures of violence are plural, but all bear the mark of dehumanization. Explicit violence constitutes the visible part of the iceberg, but much as the Antarctic ice shelf is splintering, and, so we hear, fragments are now spreading over a wide area and their future movements cannot be predicted, in a similar way violence tends to proliferate, and, to continue the metaphor, the size of the fragments is not negligible.

In this connection I would suggest another idea connected with fragmentariness. I believe that in our day we are experiencing a new form of *galut* – exile from belief in a common world. And this is in spite of all our talk of globalization and networking *ad infinitum*. I would even say that flight into communitarianism is a symptom of this new *galut*. Judgement, which classically concerned both particularity and universality, in the ethico-political context, requires a mode of alertness which can diagnose with impartiality and yet with concern, the nodal points at which the moral collapse of society is under way. Impartiality signifies the willingness to identify the loci of

degeneration within the social and political life to which one is accustomed. Concern develops this into strategies, ideas which pass over into action.

I have in mind the prevailing lacunae in the very practice of democracy. The 'thinking the particular' that I refer to is not a question of mere subsumption, but the ability to see the particular as *symptom* and to set in motion policies which prevent further degeneration. This is after all a skill familiar in the conduct of practical affairs e.g. detecting the likelihood of unspent balances in the course of end of the year's budget surveys, and above all in health care (*vide* the burgeoning literature on quality of life indices and function levels). That is to say, I build into judgement a form of enlarged thinking in which Kant was deeply interested, despite his awareness of the crooked timber of humanity – the possibility of a citizenship which would go beyond frontiers, not only in space but also in time. The concerned democrat may do well to reject the notion of inevitable degeneration and likewise the notion of an inevitable rosy future. The concept of the possible can accommodate both, and also a range of alternative futures in between. I turn now to a scattering of examples of what I mean by implicit violence drawn from more than one country.

IMPLICIT VIOLENCE – SOME TEST CASES

One of the most threatening situations developing in the two-thirds world (and this includes Africa, India and South America as well as elsewhere) runs as follows. Rapid urbanization is being accompanied by a frightening deterioration in the living conditions of large numbers of the inhabitants. A high proportion of the population under the age of 15 (sometimes as much as 35 – 40 percent of the total population) lives in single room slums or on the streets, without access to adequate nutrition, sanitation, living space or education. Their childhood has been eliminated and the experience of play unknown. The age group just above this consists of unskilled and usually unemployed teenagers. These are ready candidates for criminalization, available as recruits for creating riots, and fodder for trouble-making on payment by unscrupulous politicians and manipulators of vote banks. The causes for which they are enlisted are easily given a religious or semi-religious colouring by the same agencies, this being the easiest form of rabble-rousing in some places.

At the same time a new stratum of grass-rooted or, rather, slum-rooted dwellers are acquiring entrepreneurial skills of a variety of kinds. Some of these skills, however, include cultivating links with contractors and sub-contractors for *dadas*, *tsotsis* and *goondas* i.e. bosses of the underworld. The new stratifications move with no less dangerous potential than the boiling of unseen geological forces. Of all these phenomena none is probably more pregnant with implicit violence than this fast growing population of urban children in Sao Paolo, Soweto and Bombay, to mention just a few places. They are even more worldly wise than the unfortunates described by Dickens, and they live in conditions of unspeakable deprivation. A burning resentment is fuelled by the inanities shown daily on the television and the affluent life-style of

apartment dwellers living a stone's throw away. The adults at this level of immiseration, for the most part in the category of daily wage labour, or, an even more tragic sector, unemployables on account of Aids or other life-threatening diseases, can be seen in increasingly lengthy lines for food distributed outside temples or wherever such handouts can be had. These victims apart, recruits for stone-throwing, the slaughter of minorities, burning of innocent civilians, hostile processions, looting, raping – the list can be amplified – are to be found in plenty in a highly diversified underclass.

We disregard at out peril rapists under the age of 15, young children aiming at pictures of human beings with toy guns, increase in urban and rural suicides, and other behaviour conveniently swept under the category of social pathology. The new stratifications no doubt contain seeds which could develop in hopeful directions, for example, initiatives at the level of women's entrepreneurship in Bangladesh. But there are illiterate millions who, on account of their illiteracy, cannot open a bank account and who at village *panchayat* (council) level, women especially, cannot read minutes or other documents to which they may be nonetheless required to provide a signature. They are, willy nilly, dupes of a system which it would be a mockery to say had any place whatsoever in a democracy.

That there should be bitter competition in backwardness between various sections of the underprivileged, or that resort should be made to the country boat of caste, could be anticipated. That conditions of implicit violence, which is, after all, what deprivation amounts to, should break out in explicit violence likewise is no surprise. Even in the most modern cities, abounding in shimmering plate glass canyons, there are places where fires of resentment and despair smoulder in vast landfills of human lives. And these are already being bulldozed over by the latest fad of the wealthy nations – globalization.

My next set of cases of implicit violence pinpoints matters of default and delay – the sorts of thing which, to those familiar with the vocabulary of transgression, are analogous to sins of omission, a class of sin which, I imagine, is on all fours with sins of commission. Both classes generate a plethora of excuses, and an excuse, so we are told, is not quite the same thing as a reason or a cause. The strange thing about cases of default is the way in which so many of them are ostensibly connected with reform, or more widely, measures intended to spread a benefit, enhance lifechances, increase prosperity, and so forth.

My first case of this kind is the extent to which the implicit violence involved in the construction of the Tehri dam in Garhwal, India is increasingly coming to light. The construction not only displaced hundreds of families and caused deforestration on a large scale, but has put the whole area in jeopardy, given the geological instability of that part of the mountain range. The measure drained off alluvial soil to the plains and lined the pockets of contractors and other middlemen also from the plains. It may be remembered that outside Europe there are many more divides than that of town and country, for example, the contrast of hills and plains, tribal/non-tribal, forest-dwellers/non-forest dwellers, and, cutting through these, the distinctions of rich and

poor, caste and class. There is a twofold implicit violence in the above: default in ignoring some of the serious consequences of the measures embarked on, secondly even when damaging consequences are foreseen, deeming the benefit to some to be of greater account than the damage done to others. Protests of those concerned expressed through legitimate channels were ignored and leaders were often roughed up.

My next case of default revisits cities once more, specifically, the working of bureaucracies. This, too, can fit under the umbrella of intended reform in that bureaucracies have expanded as a result of increasing responsibilities taken on by governments. Colonial steel frames have been inherited by newly independent countries and perpetuated by them. In federal regimes, of course, there are double bureaucratic structures, at the centre, and in each constituent state. The kind of default I regard as mounting to implicit violence includes allowing cases of 'slipping through the net' of welfare entitlements, the provision of inadequate backup facilities, failure to communicate information about entitlement, and withholding benefit even when funding is available. It might be objected that the range of possible cases in fact amounts to inefficiency rather than violence. Notoriously, violence can be involved both in situations where efficiency *or* inefficiency is the order of the day. I would reckon that failure to maintain an adequate fleet of ambulances in working order is a clear case of implicit violence. I would classify likewise the following in the same category: failure to utilize available grants for welfare, failure to fill up posts, or worse, freezing or abolishing the same when there is no doubt about the need for them, and the holding up of files, causing hardship to those concerned. Clearly inordinate delay can be coupled with default as an all too familiar characteristic of bureaucratic procedures.

In recent years similar charges have been levelled against modes of functioning of the police, the very vehicle of law and order intended to control/prevent violence. Inaction or delay in acting, worst of all, standing by and looking the other way, all amount to implicit violence to those in need of protection. These are the kinds of occasion when the police themselves incur the wrath of the crowd and violence explodes in spite of, plus because of them.

A different type of implicit violence has been pointed out by critics of affirmative action. The introduction of special job opportunities for hitherto deprived sections, whether through a quota system, prioritizing, or allowing a reduced percentage of marks in examinations, has invariably provoked a backlash. There is something wrong-headed about attempting to remedy an injustice by perpetrating another. In India, the so-called reservation policy led to the self-immolation of some students on the grounds of unjust discrimination a few years ago. Interesting appeals have come before courts/tribunals in America filed by white Caucasian males on grounds of absence of equal opportunity. The issue which emerges from such cases appears to be whether or not, in the pursuit of justice, some degree of violence might be necessary. Tolstoy and many anarchists maintained that all forms of state functioning, from the armed forces downwards, are at bottom based on violence. And yet, as Hobbes stressed, the alternative might well be chaos.

In a democracy, the locus of power is said to lie with the people, but there are a hundred and one ways in which this power can be a dead letter, the electoral process notwithstanding, and, indeed, often because of events taking place in the course of that very process. I need not cite well known specific cases where electoral machinery has failed to do justice to the will of the people and where the whole process appears to have been a gigantic fiddle. The problem is that, whereas explicit and implicit violence can be expected in totalitarian *cum* militaristic regimes, the identification of both in *soi-disant* democratic countries is reluctantly recognized. The reasons for this are various, and among these I mention only three.

First, the electoral machine being what it is, political parties naturally focus on promises for the future, leaving out the failings of their previous performances. Secondly, failures, such as the eruption of violence in inner cities, are attributed to the misdeeds of others, such as earlier colonial masters, infiltrators across frontiers, inherited institutional inelasticities, and disasters such as famines, floods and earthquakes – all of these being regarded as hardly the responsibility of such and such a government. The third reason is the belief that whatever failings democracies may have, other sorts of government are known to be even worse, so sackcloth and ashes are hardly in order. As a result, a great deal is swept under the carpet, and this includes a host of matters gradually, but tardily, receiving public attention e.g. domestic violence, violence under the cloak of cultural affirmation, bullying in schools, paedophilia, oppressive conditions in prisons and detention centres for asylum seekers, increase in cases of juvenile delinquency including rape, mugging and arson, to mention a few examples.

What I am seeking to highlight are the ways in which the signals which presage various types of serious social malaise, which I take as indicative of the implicit violence embedded in social, political and economic life, all need prompt diagnosis and remedial action both on the part of the public and the administration. Needless to say, political systems centring on power politics – an infection no less endemic in democracies than elsewhere – and a public anaesthetized by circuses and news of the doings of mindless pop heroes and heroines and socialites, will be least concerned about implicit violence and what its hydra-headed consequences will be.

RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

Of all these symptomatic matters a more extensive discussion of religion and violence is called for, for the various media are always ready to give much space and time to this. If religion, usually thought to be an important glue, making for the cohesion of societies, however, contains much that makes for strife, this needs recognition and further probing. This is an extensive area and only a few of the issues will be pinpointed.

1. To begin with, the regions in the world where religion seems to fan conflict all differ vastly, and this includes Ireland, the Middle East, the Balkans, West Africa and India. And this is by no means an exhaustive list.

Reportage in the media singles out religion as the key marker in such places, leaving out other factors such as remembered outrages and catastrophes, historical legacies including colonial ones, factors stemming from the break-up of empires, believed complicity with enemies, economic scarcities and rivalries, political ambitions of caucuses, and revolt of oppressed sections of societies. To single out religion as the central bone of contention amounts to distortion of conflictual situations which are invariably complex.

2. Secondly, simplistic analyses cover up the extent to which communities polarized by the media have lived amicably side by side, sometimes over centuries, and also draw a veil over the extent to which boundary crossing, the saving of those in jeopardy by friendly neighbours, is currently taking place. If economic deprivation is often a source of conflict it can also be an occasion for solidarity across boundaries.

3. Thirdly, the failure of those in authority to anticipate trouble spots and take immediate action to round up those responsible, provides scope for interested parties, including retrograde self-designated religious authorities, to fan the flames of violence. In days of easily available transport facilities, trouble-makers, usually paid for the purpose, move in and perpetrate atrocities. The use of slogans for rabble-rousing adds to the terror of the victims who are all identified as belonging to this or that community, and the massacre accelerates.

4. Fourthly, a no less vicious way in which violence comes about is through the exploitation of communal feeling in order to drum up support for those who are shortly to face elections. Justification of the massacre of hundreds, if not thousands, goes on familiar lines, e.g. 'The state government has been pandering to community X. It is time the latter were taught a lesson'. In other words, cynicism about politicians ('They haven't done enough', or, alternatively, 'They have done too much') leads to the victimizing of the innocent, to say nothing of the enormous cost of rehabilitation and the task of mending broken relationships, relationships that had flourished between neighbours over generations.

What needs to be looked into is why religion seems to lend itself to exploitation and what the elements are in it which seem implicitly to instigate violence. J.W. Bowker wrote a paper some years ago in which he spoke of the unacceptable face of religion.[1] His analysis was a balanced one, beginning by noting the role which religion has in promoting human survival and the manner in which religions are 'systems organised for the process, protection, and transmission of information'[2]. Mention of information sparks inquiry, for grounds for cognitive claims in this case are based on the assumption of 'higher knowledge,' pertaining to a class of 'experts' (clerics, mullahs and their various counterparts) who are reckoned to *know*. All this is fortified by reference to scriptures (or their equivalents) and the criteria laid down for belonging or not belonging. The latter brings in the factor of boundary and the division between 'us' and 'them' by virtue of unique possession of the truth. The duty to transmit all this to descendants ensures a stream of those deemed to be faithful to the original 'message'. In these ways ideational di-

vergence adds extra strength to economic, social and political tension and percolates into the everyday exchanges of social life. Passages from scriptures that justify violence are not hard to find, even though reformist thinkers claim to detect therein reference to inner struggle rather than sanction to kill others. Hermeneutic stances may either be absent or at most confined to a few scholars, and so sleeping dogmas are allowed to lie. They lie in a double sense. They remain unexamined and are on occasion trotted out in the form of slogans. Secondly, they lie in that they are false, when wrested out of context, both textual and historical. Small wonder that, when disturbed dogmas begin to bark, great is the impact thereof.

All too often then, religion can be said to contain the message of implicit violence. The combination of sedimented histories of past conflicts, present grievances and present poverty, when overlaid by a heightened sense of religious otherness, amounts to a highly inflammable package. The identification of others in terms of exclusively religious markers is necessarily accompanied by intolerance, and at worst, by fanaticism and violence. Communities targeted for attack, burnt alive and first subjected to every form of barbarity, are driven, or rather the survivors are driven, further into enclave existence. When the *dérapage*, or slide, into hatred of fellow citizens has reached such proportions, channels of communication are silted up to a degree which negates any remedial action by outside agencies.

A somewhat different analysis of the violent potential of religion, but no less hard-hitting, is given by René Girard.[3] He singles out the role played by *sacrifice*, and the rituals it involves in laying down a pattern of legitimation of violence which lies at the heart of religious belief and practice. He cites, in this connection, the following notions familiar in religious discourse: the purity of sacrificial objects, the mysteries involved in the *modus operandi* of sacrifice, the benefit accruing to believers through ritual performance, and the special sanctity attributed to martyrs to the faith. Combined with ethnonationalism, the implicit violence cocooned in religion breaks out of its cosy covering and inundates all who come in its path. Liberal ideas and secularist teachings fall on deaf ears in such circumstances.

A third writer who provides timely commentary on the role of religion in modern life is Niklas Luhmann.[4] He sees in religion a sub-system in a network of systems whose function it is to give *meaning*. Qua sub-system, it would not be expected to function as a boundary-crossing integrating force, especially in a secularized society. Moreover, in places where religion of a fundamentalist brand dominates both state and society, we would not find that religion functions merely as a subsystem. The function of religion in Taliban-like regimes is to bulldoze contingency and clamp down an absolutist theocratic ideology on all walks of life. In such conditions the valorization of martyrdom for political purposes appears in an extreme form. Invariably it is the young who became suicide bombers, that is, they are ready fodder for this distorted view of the merits of seeking death for oneself and for others. The possibility of negotiation is nullified. So Luhmann's thesis about religion as a

subsystem does not apply when religion is taken as the *central* power house that moves the state and where civil society is a null quantity.

Where the state is avowedly secular and society is not, we have the kind of situation which explodes in some parts of India today. The implicit violence within religion is patent, and likewise the tendencies which lead to an explosion in an explicit form are near the surface. Criss-crossing factors, such as election pressures, regional imbalances, economic tensions, and relations with neighbouring countries, agglomerate around an apparently religious core while the ensuing rioting and perpetrating of atrocities are all classified by the media as 'communal'.

This word has a particular meaning in India, namely, pertaining to a community defined by the religion of those who belong to it. And here a wider issue looms into view. Implicit violence in political contexts seems to be associated with communities rather than individuals. As communal tension increases, communities usually appeal to the nótion of 'collective rights', a concept which, in my view, runs counter to the concept of the individuality on which the discourse of rights is founded.

Authoritarian sub-groups spearhead such appeals. But they will certainly not voice the opinion of dissenters among those whom they claim to represent. The oppressiveness of the traditionalist lobby can be seen in rulings of rabbinical courts on the *agunot* issue, the anomaly of diverse systems of personal law in India, the whole question of funding for sectarian schools, and women's rights, especially over abortion. I would go so far as to say that the protagonists of collective rights, that is, those who strive for preferential treatment for themselves, support a line of action which is implicitly violent vis á vis some of the members of their *own* collective, to say nothing of their attitude towards outsiders. The stance of cultural affirmation is only too often bad news within the in-group itself, and the question of female circumcision is a clear case of this. It is time now to try and pull these various strands together.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From among the different issues discussed the following five may be mentioned, for the rest are really encapsulated within them. My initial question whether the distinction between explicit and implicit violence holds arose from my hunch that a great deal of explicit violence occurs because of 'failure to read the signs', the implicit violence which builds up over the years. Major conflagrations cannot fail to occupy attention, divert funding and manpower resources. What is no less sinister is the *dérapage or* sliding that takes place when multiple cultures of violence are regarded as society's everyday performances, for these lead to a runaway culture of violence which goes out of control. Secondly, powerful vested interests control economic and political networks both nationally and internationally. A particularly vicious example of this is the link between the notorious resistance to gun control in some countries, the armaments industry (without which many economies would

collapse), and the need to fuel conflicts in different parts of the globe where both dated weaponry and the latest products of contemporary technology can be unloaded. The turning of swords into ploughshares is stymied not only by these intricate connections, but by the ethos of maximization of wealth at all costs, and, needless to say, with utter disregard for considerations of distributive justice.

A third highly disturbing consideration is provided by evidence of fundamental disagreement about the *need* to bring an end to the culture of violence in all its hydra-like forms. Ideologies which justify violence still flourish. The cloak provided by certain kinds of religious system has already been noted. Suicide bombers, defenders of female circumcision, those who justify the abrogation of individual rights in the service of the nation, all challenge the faith that so many of us have that negotiation can prevail. It has been said by some that culture seems to have taken the place that ideology had before. But there is a difference, for whereas ideology eventually shows its true colours and, on balance, earns the condemnation it deserves, cultures, only too often these days, parade as self-legitimating. But to say that 'X is part of their culture' is by no means to legitimate it. And yet is there a supervenient point of view from which all others can be judged? The answer, I think, is that judgement does not need a supervenient ultimate stance. What is important is that the task of judgement should not be laid aside. What it demands is the cultivation of a moral sensitivity capable of distinguishing the better from the worse, and above all, ruling out any course of action that hurts others. Such an orientation – for we are talking about a regulative cluster of ideas – could serve to prune away much of the unthinkable that is lamentably still part of the everyday. I have in mind the commodification of human beings, the various ways in which many governments use the educational system to indoctrinate the young, and the refusal to improve the life-chances of the poor because it would mean curbing the wealth of the rich.

Finally, I would make a plea for inclusion among substantive 'bads' all hidden occasions of violence. Our espousal of a pluralistic society does not exclude sifting the good from the bad. I have stressed the theme of implicit violence because, within the horrors of the twentieth century, is writ large the way in which the implicit became the explicit. Important as it is to analyse in depth nuclear threats and the ins and outs of globalization, these should not crowd out of our minds issues nearer at hand lest there be a *dérapage* into a life which is nasty, brutish and short for all. Should that take place, we may be fated to hear once more the words voiced in the thirties: 'We never thought it could happen here'.

NOTES

1 "The Burning Fuse: The unacceptable face of religion," *Zygon*, vol. 21, No.4, Blackwell Publishers, December, 1986, Oxford.

2 Bowker, p. 119.

3 *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Willams,: Crossroad, New York, 1996.

4 Niklas Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society,* trans. Stephen Holmes and Charles Larmore,: Columbia University Press, New York, 1982.

Chapter 11

Suffering and Evil

INTRODUCTION

The texture of what follows will be loosely woven, although the weave may tighten up when arguments are under consideration. But cultural phenomena straddle the distinctions logicians seek to place before us, and the attitudes evidenced in the *ethoi* of diverse peoples appear with the unfailing regularity of a hand-blocked design, recognizable no doubt, but not bearing the sharp definition that those possessed of *l'esprit de géometrie* would wish. For me, in other words, the cultural basket is the key. Not, however, that I see forms of life as bedrock, for they could only be such in societies that did not change at all, and there are probably none like this today. Indeed, in studying 'modern Indian society' the investigator is constantly made aware of the metamorphoses taking place *within* cultural baskets.

My reflections take off from the first of the Stephanos Nirmalendu Ghosh lectures delivered by Professor Matilal in 1980.[1] As a background to this essay on *duḥkha* (suffering), it is useful to note what he said in his Inaugural Lecture in Oxford[2] about the common factors in religions. He lists the following: a sense that the unexamined life is not worth living, control of instincts, the cultivation of certain positive emotions, that external circumstances are not all there can be, people can be better than they are and experience more than they do, the reference to a higher plane of existence. He confesses that this is an impressionistic view. Even so it is interesting on many counts, although one almost hesitates to take him up on what he himself counts as impressionistic.

At first sight many of the considerations (and they belong to different categories of discourse) seem to refer to ethics. And then one notices that there is no mention of conduct towards others on the list, although the possibility of people being 'better' than they are would seem to involve their relations to others. His approach is further clarified in the *duḥkha* lecture in which a two-fold definition of a religious act is given, namely one given or approved by a religious tradition, and one dominated by a concern for one's own good, e.g. *nirvāṇa*, salvation, mystical union or heaven. By contrast he defines a moral act as one showing concern for one's fellowmen and lack of self-interest.

The relation of ethics and religion opens up a whole syllabus of issues which cannot be gone into here. It may be pertinent to mention in passing that Professor Matilal was not inclined to make a sharp distinction between Hindu and Buddhist views in *certain* contexts (e.g. in considering art). The close connection between ethical and religious goals of life on the Buddhist view would seem to belie this if his characterization of the distinction between moral and ethical acts is taken as the 'standard' Hindu one (if there be one such). There is something Pickwickian about regarding the pursuit of *nirvāṇa*

et al. as self-regarding, given the *anatta* (no self) doctrine and the general injunction to curb egoity. Resort to the cultural basket offers a measure of clarification. *Dharmaśāstras* and *mokshaśāstras*, we are taught, are to be distinguished. In this way an intertextual distinction is made the basis of distinguishing between the phenomenology of the ethical and the religious life. Or is it the other way round?

In any case to demarcate the ethical from the religious (on the ground of what is *samājik*, to do with society, and non-*samājik*) constitutes a major complication if we are to try and isolate a so-called Hindu view of the problem of evil. I am not taking up two other strategies which are quite feasible, namely tracing the matter *historically*, or non-acceptance of Matilal's demarcation between the ethical and the religious on the ground that a study of Hindu culture reveals concern with the *ethico-religious*, a position which, it seems to me, can be satisfactorily worked out developmentally and with due noting of the comparatively late arrival of treatments of *mokṣa* in the philosophical texts. Let us turn to the lecture on *duḥkha*.

THE ARGUMENT CONCERNING DUḤKHA

In what follows I present Matilal's argument, proceeding closely according to his text:

- The 'pain-existence equation' (in Eliade's language) underlines the undesirability or non-finality of the worldly life for persons who strive for a transcendent truth beyond all this.
- The pain-thesis is not factual but evaluative (i.e. not a proposition but evaluative-exhortative).
- The pain-thesis is a prescription for those wanting to attain liberation.
- If we are *mumukṣu* we should attach a negative value to all varieties of happiness.
- *Duḥkha* loses its significance in the context of *nirvāṇa* et al.
- If the pain-thesis is non-factual 'it is not falsifiable by citation of any apparent counter-example'.
- The pain-thesis is a *satya*, i.e. the sort of expression that is 'used in the Indian context ambiguously for both factual truths and evaluative exhortations'.

Now I have several difficulties about this sequence of positions. Re (1), is there not a considerable difference between regarding worldly life as 'undesirable' and regarding it as non-final? The point is perhaps that the *mumukṣu* (aspirant to liberation) will need to regard life as *both* undesirable and non-final if he is to detach himself from his present condition. To be weighed down by present miseries or regard them as all that there is, is not to make oneself unfit for the pursuit of 'transcendent truth'. Next arises the question of the proper attitude the *mumukṣu* should have. This includes both

his attitude to misery and his attitude to happiness. The classic (and classical) advice to look alike on weal and woe is consonant with the pain-thesis if we take the latter as evaluative. To attach a negative value to all varieties of happiness would enable the *mumukṣu* to avoid the temptation to disregard the pain-thesis. Such disregard would amount to ignoring a prescription, if indeed the pain-thesis amounts to a prescription. *Duḥkha* is said to lose its significance (I am not sure what this means – lose its sting, lose its relevance?) in the context of *nirvāṇa*, etc. (presumably in the context of the *pursuit* of *nirvāṇa*, etc.) in that the *mumukṣu* knows there is more and that that more is not in the nature of d*uḥkha*. I leave out the further puzzle as to how he can be said to *know* this while still in a state of d*uḥkha*.

Point (6) is a logical one, taking, however, it must be noted, a hypothetical form. But the insistence on non-factuality seems to be radically undermined by point (7), by the reference to *satya*, for if there are expressions which are ambiguously descriptive and prescriptive, and the pain-thesis is one such, the series of steps by which it is made out to be evaluative seems to be without point. The argument, in fact, seems to hover between maintaining that it is evaluative and maintaining that it is prescriptive. Yet not all evaluative sentences are prescriptive (unless we conflate persuasion and prescription) although *some* may be. A more plausible elucidation, if we wish to avoid saying that the pain-thesis is a factual statement, might be to maintain that it has the logical status of a hypothetical in that *if*, and only *if*, one is striving for transcendent truth, one should (in the manner of an imperative *bhāvaya*) be aware of the 'undesirability or non-finality of the worldly life'. *Duḥkha* will not 'lose its significance' for one who does not set his sights on *nirvāṇa*, etc. on such a view.

Now, quite evidently, not all persons strive for a transcendent truth beyond this worldly life. Such persons will not only be concerned with factual assertions about the perceptual world in the manner of the Carvakas, but also make their own evaluative judgements about what amounts to weal and woe, what causes them, and how the former can be attained and the latter overcome. The ordinary individual in all cultures finds that life contains both suffering and happiness, and that some sufferings can be remedied, or at least mitigated, and some not. The ordinary man also finds that the time factor works variously in the case of both suffering and happiness. Transience is a blessing when suffering comes to an end. Duration is a curse when sufferings are prolonged. The ordinary man, along with Goethe, bewails the transience of happiness. Above all, he understands the value of endurance, the Stoic and the *sthitaprajna* (the imperturbable man) alike typifying just this. The *mumukṣu* could perhaps say, when reminded of the attitude of those who do not share his aspirations, that the religious stance (as shown in setting one's sights on transcendent truth) enables a man to see the empirical world with its joys and sorrows in proper perspective, i.e. as something to be valued negatively, i.e. discounted. This, however, would not be offered in consolation, for consolation is not under discussion. The question is rather whether there is anything

other than what is our lot at the *vyāvahārika* (empirical / behavioural) level and which can be a proper goal for the *mumukṣu*.

And now a more serious difficulty raises its head. If *duḥkha* be taken as a counterpart of the concept of evil in other traditions does the pain-thesis contain a prescription (or advice) to disregard all that could be included under the rubric of evil in order that the *mumukṣu* avoid hindrance in the pursuit of his transcendent goal? More plainly, does the concept of *duḥkha* actually accommodate the concept of evil at all or is it rather the nearest we can find to it, or, thirdly, is it a concept which functions *in lieu of* it? To consider this, albeit in somewhat minimal fashion, must occupy us next.

THE CONCEPT OF EVIL

Overtly monotheist religions (as against any that may include monotheist forms within a more general rubric), it seems hardly necessary to say, have found the presence of evil in the world a serious challenge to the posits of (a) omnipotence and (b) goodness that usually accompany the monotheist standpoint. Does the fact of evil, or of suffering for that matter, pose a problem (whether religious, metaphysical or ethical) if the posits of the omnipotence and goodness of God are not maintained? At the level of myth, contrary powers are taken care of through what is virtually an exercise of imagination on the part of poets and sages. Gods and demons wrestle, and, if the prospect is not exactly edifying from the human perspective, at least there may be some satisfaction in finding human struggles matched by similar struggles on a cosmic scale. Vedic concerns were this-worldly to a degree, flights of mythopoeic imagination notwithstanding. The theme of *duḥkha* is scarcely mentioned, and propitiations/remedies are found through resort to ritual, through human participation in an equilibrium which needed careful tending by all engaged in it, whatever be their place in the cosmic hierarchy. In fact the maintenance of balance was seen as of such crowning importance that the beneficent is polarized to the destructive rather than to the evil. The theory of *guṇas* reinforced an attitude which set greatest store by harmony.

The mythological perspective continues in some of the Upaniṣads, for example in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* good and evil can arise through the conflict of gods and demons. They can also arise through the fetters made by human beings' acts in this or previous lives (*Maitri Up.*IV.2). The law of *karma*, if not inexorable, which it does not seem to be, enters the scene in tandem operation with cosmic powers. The factuality of much that is undesirable, call it *duḥkha* or *pāpa* as you will, is taken for granted. Why it should occur at all (the question that troubles the theist) is of less import than how it should be tackled and brought to an end. Ritual performance, valour, ascetic rigour, ethical action, saintliness – all in turn appeared at different periods of history, and to different sets of people, as ways of countering the surd element in life.

The difference in standpoint between the theist and the outlook outlined here cannot be overemphasized. It amounts virtually to the difference

between why and how. To ask 'why' is to raise a question about justice. The Indian standpoint is centred on the 'how' of getting rid of the unwanted condition. Cosmic contrariness and the *karma* theory provided sufficient explanation of 'why'. Add the posit of divine *līlā* and you get an additional reason why questions cannot be pushed very far. The tendency to find the cause of sufferings/evil in one's own actions diverted attention from the possibility that much of human misery is caused by what *others* do. The searchlight of diagnosis is turned on human frailties, rather than on the injustice inflicted by a potentate-type god or on the unjust structures of society. Disasters and catastrophes were only what one might expect, the concept of a perfect world being a thoroughly alien idea. Divine beings underwent trials and tribulations, and epic heroes and heroines most certainly had a miserable time. It would all be worked out – although not necessarily in a felicific way – over cycles of time much vaster than anything economists could envisage, generations later, in their talk of 'in the long run'.

It is worth noticing, moreover, the role played, by default, by the deity according to the philosophical systems. On the Vaiśeṣika view, the role of God is confined to a reshuffling of constituents that already exist. Likewise the part he plays in meting out reward and punishment is never fully reconcilable with the law of *karma* which again, already operates. The Vedāntic combination of *līlā* and *karma* is hardly conducive to the raising of weighty questions about the whys and wherefores of human misery. Furthermore, since, on the Vedāntic view, human souls are not created, there is no creator who can in any way be made *responsible* for human destinies. It is hard to extract anything like a concept of Providence from the systems unless we turn, for example, to Śaiva Siddhānta.

No doubt a concept of Providence faces other difficulties, especially concerning divine attributes, powers, limitations if any, and so on. A Hindu concept of Providence would have to be at the *saguṇa* level, located, let us venture to say, in the deity's *snigdha rūpa* (tender gentle form). But the implication of his *snigdha rūpa* would not be omnipotence (although man would be more likely to prevail if he had God on his side) but rather his *accessibility*. In devotional literature in regional languages we find developed expositions of the doctrine of grace, but I am not very sure we have much that is analogous to Providence (this of course is neither a merit nor a demerit). For the latter, it seems to me, we need the concepts of creation, teleology, and the affirmation of continuous presence throughout history. Since teleology connotes tendency in a certain direction, and this seems to presuppose lack, Hindu thinkers found it incompatible with the nature of a divine being. *Līlā* did not connote waywardness so much as an overflowing inexhaustibility whose nature it was to be limitless.

The multiple traditions of Hinduism do not, as far as I know, include looking upon God as a fellow-sufferer with man. But if some of the Vaiṣṇava analogies for the relation between God and man are followed through (the analogy of friendship, for example) this possibility is not excluded. At the everyday level the concept of Bhagavan, which is not treated in scholarly texts,

seems to function very like Providence. But if one looks for the concept of a God who acts in *history* (as distinct from one who descends from time to time but in cosmic time rather than in historic time), one is hard put to find it. We are thrown back on the concept of *duḥkha* once more.

DUḤKHA RETHOUGHT

Whether or not *duḥkha* parallels the term evil in other religious traditions, there can be no doubt about its pivotal role in Hindu thought systems. If liberation is regarded as a religious goal rather than an ethical one, *duḥkha* is likewise regarded as something which has to be tackled through the religious life. If we follow Professor Matilal's analysis, this life is concerned with the quest for 'transcendent truth'.

I wish to proceed in a rather different direction in what follows. We have two alternatives to *duḥkha*, namely *sukha* (happiness) and *ānanda* (bliss). Let us examine the *duḥkha / sukha* polarity first. The ordinary man takes it for grant that *sukha* is preferable to *duḥkha* but knows through experience that pursuit of the one and avoidance of the other are often self-defeating. We are *overtaken* by experiences. They constitute our *Befindlichkeit*. Vātsyāyana does not draw our attention to the circumstance that all experiences involve an element of *duḥkha* as consolation. He could have done so. At least part of the message of Buddha in the mustard seed episode is to point out, in John Stuart Mill's phrase, nature's everyday performances, i.e. to reconcile us to the situation. Vātsyāyana does not seek to reconcile us to the situation. Let us move on.

A contrary reminder could be given. If '*duḥkham hina sukhaṃ na bhavati*' is true one could also say '*sukhaṃ hina duḥkham na bhavati*'. But if there is no doubt about the first (temporality alone would provide sufficient verification of it since felicific situations come to an end) there is serious doubt as to the truth of the second. A great deal of suffering has no mitigating element of happiness in it whatsoever. To maintain that the patient racked with pain and the concentration camp victim undergoing torture experience anything other than unalloyed suffering would be a cruel mockery. There is something more than pain, namely agony, and most languages have a range of terms with which doctors and their patients are all too familiar. Agony, both physical and mental, scarcely fits into the classification given in the *Sāṃkhyakārikās*.

But the two Sanskrit tags invite further scrutiny. Do they not point to the human circumstance that (the cases of agony apart) 'the admixture of *sukha* and *duḥkha*' defies distinction? It would seem so. And here I think we need to pull out something from the cultural basket, namely this – admixtures are bad. This is writ large in Manu, for example. But if any should object that to admit admixture still does not justify saying *sarvam duḥkham* (*sarvam* being an exaggeration, as hedonistically inclined students sometimes like to point out) we can have recourse to a piece of proverbial wisdom in Bengali at least and possibly in other regional languages as well. When a situation is muddied, churned up, turgid, it is remarked that 'the water is stirred up'

(a loose translation), i.e. the entire water is affected and not just the unclear surface. It is the muddiness which predominates. Here we have a telling example of the way philosophical insights can feed off proverbial wisdom. The opposite is, of course, often the case, when philosophers depart radically from what the ordinary man thinks to be self-evident. But the analogy must not be pressed too far. Sediment eventually settles and the pond appears relatively clear after some time. This does not happen in the case of human suffering. The existence of the patient (his *Befindlichkeit*) continues to be pervaded by pain.

A similar point can be made about the Buddhist analysis of transience. Moments of happiness are all too fleeting. *Duḥkha* also, no doubt, has its ebb and flow. When pain is a little less there is a modicum of relief, a neutral watershed rather than a moment of pleasure, but it is muddied by the knowledge that the pain will return.[3] Temporality comes to our rescue when *duḥkha* is somewhat less for a time. It can also be a scourge when miseries endure. So both Vātsyāyana and the Buddhists give no weight to mitigating moments of relief, and for the same reason. Such weightage would deflect one from realizing the vanity of existence and the need to cultivate detachment. What emerges from the foregoing is that in the case of the *sukha / duḥkha* polarity the two tags draw attention to not only polarity but admixture, and in terms of the cultural basket, admixtures are disvalues. Whether they count as *evil* is difficult to say for the reason that, it seems to me, philosophical tradition is content to make a general categorial distinction between positive and negative value, the further elucidation of the latter being left either to mythology or to the theory of *karma*.

It is clear at any rate that the *sukha/duḥkha* syndrome belongs to the *vyāvahārika* level and that there is no way out of it at that level. The factuality of this, I suggest, is not of no account, for unless a man is convinced that the unalloyed absence of *duḥkha* is not to be had in worldly (*weltlich*) existence (I phrase this so as to take in the Buddhist position as well) he will not be moved to look elsewhere. *Sarvam duḥkham*, I therefore venture to say, is not so much 'ambiguous' as containing a two-staged sequence of insights, namely:

- *sukha/duḥkha* is both a polarity and something more. It indicates an admixture which is irremediable at the *vyāvahārika* level.
- A polarity of a different kind is possible, that between *duḥkha* and *ānanda/nirvāṇa*.

Each of the insights is open to expansion. Regarding the first, we need to agree that admixtures are bad, that what is unalloyed (suffering excepted) is preferable to what is mixed. Regarding the second, we need to understand that the nature of the second alternative to *duḥkha, ānanda / nirvāṇa*, is of a completely different order from *sukha*. The term *duḥkha*, therefore, has two different contraries. Indeed *ānanda* and *nirvāṇa* are also different from each other (not that one could verify this experientially) belonging as they do to

different thought systems. However, they are both equally unspecifiable and indescribable through the use of ordinary language.

Phenomenologically it is more than possible that the nature of *duḥkha* for the aspirant after higher things is also vastly different from what is experienced by the disappointed experiencer of the *sukha / duḥkha* syndrome. The intuition into there being something radically wrong with life as we normally live it is surely something further (other/more) than normal disgust at the pendulums of fortune and admixtures of experience that are our common lot. We have then, it could be said, something very like a *metabasis eis allo genos* in the shift from insight (a) to insight (b). But advance to (b) would need to begin with insight (a). Or, invoking Divided Line parlance, demarcation serves to point up the route of ascent.

If there is any cogency at all in what has been sketched so far, ambiguity resides in the umbrella term *duḥkha* and not in oscillation between factual and evaluative uses of language. The ambiguity of the word *duḥkha* consists in its dual usage in both polarities, i.e. *sukha / duḥkha*, and *duḥkha / ānanda / nirvāṇa*. It is small wonder that many German Indologists and some of their predecessors attributed a generalized *Weltschmerz* to all Indian philosophical thought. But it is time that reflection turned to another leading strand in Indian thought, the theory of *karma*.

KARMA

The *karma* concept provides a neat explanatory hypothesis about all woeful phenomena, referring them to an individual's past acts, extending the connotation of past beyond the bounds of a single lifetime. Moreover it leaves open a range of possibilities for the future, providing determination without determinism. Radhakrishnan describes the law of *karma* as that 'by which virtue brings its triumph and ill-doing its retribution' and that it is 'the unfolding of the law of our being.'[14]

The problem is that this is just what it does not do. The wicked prosper and the good suffer, and even if things were to be evened out in the future, something which may well be stymied by further calamities, this provides no explanation, let alone justification, of unmerited suffering *now*. It provides no explanation of natural evils, including within this category the innumerable miseries caused by disease. Furthermore, we are left in the dark as to whether it is *moral* to accumulate good *karmas* or merely prudential. The chances are that it is *prudential* in that it is wise to cut short *saṃsāra* (sequence of births-deaths). But what about those sufferings which are due to others' actions or society's inaction? Could war, famine or the Holocaust, for example, be at all explained by reference to an individual's *karmas*? If not, we are led to the position that, on balance, individuals are *victims* rather than agents who suffer the effects of their own previous actions.

There are other difficulties too. According to the *karma* theory it looks as if to exist at all is a punishment in the sense that, if all *karmas* had been worked through, *saṃsāra* would have come to an end. Does this mean

that there is merit in not being born again or does it mean that in not being born again one has gone beyond the sphere of merit and demerit? Bringing in the posit of God's existence creates a further complication. The position presented in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6, 16) that God is the ordainer of all deeds, seems irreconcilable with the *karma* theory. When the Vaiśeṣikas hold that God can interfere with the operation of *karma* in order to dispense justice, does this reflect a sense that the law of *karma* is unjust? But would it make sense to speak of an impersonal law as just or unjust? The operation of such a law is not elucidated as far as its origin is concerned, although the possibility of going beyond it through leading a life free of attachments is set out as a possibility. As for the difficulty of combining the law of *karma* with the posit of God's existence, this may, in fact, underline the point that, in philosophical Hindu thought at least, the issue of whether God exists or not is not of paramount importance.

So if the law of *karma* is to bear the brunt of explanation of human woe the considerations given above would indicate that it is hardly able to do this. There were other elements in the cultural basket which dealt with surd factors in the cosmos, among them mythological beings and the *guṇas* being the chief, and it is here I suspect, that one would need to look for Hindu insights into the nature of evil. So far then, it looks as if *duḥkha* can be caused by chance happenings in the natural world which cannot be described as either good or evil.

As far as philosophical traditions were concerned one might hazard the opinion that while a great deal of attention was bestowed on the analysis of *woe* and how it was to be tackled, there were concepts and trends of thought in a long history of philosophical thought to work against the recognition of radical evil (*Böse*). Among these were the concept of *māyā* (limited to Advaita Vedānta no doubt), the value set on detachment, the yogic lifestyle centred on a target beyond good and evil, seeing the main causes of *duḥkha* as internal (*lobh, krodh* and the like), and not to be missed, the distinction between the *vyāvahārika* and the *pāramārthika* (beyond the phenomenal/transcendent). This wide scattering of concepts and tendencies is matched by the wide range of rubrics under which the treatment of evil can be found in the relevant literature, ranging over suffering, bondage, sin, ignorance, demons, etc.

That the Zoroastrian 'solution' of the problem of evil did not form part of the corpus of ways of seeing 'contrary' phenomena is a strange quirk of cultural history. The only strict dualism to be found among the systems is in the Sāṃkhya and the contending principles therein bear no resemblance whatsoever to Ahriman and Ahura Mazda. Deriving from the Arabic/Persian, the word '*shaitan*' is in common usage in North India, downgraded into the meaning 'naughty' and used mainly to upbraid small children. At village level the word can still be used to refer to ne'er-do-wells, but there are other more colourful terms that fit them more neatly. A study of expletives and terms of abuse is not irrelevant in this connection as these give an idea of popular understanding of various shades of iniquity. The difficulty of unravelling the fine filaments of popular imagination and linguistic usage may seem a far cry

from the conceptual venturing of philosophers, but it is a task which I believe is worth undertaking. For example, to catch the resonances of the common question one Bengali may ask another, 'How is your *kajkormo*?' reveals a whole thought-world and life-world regarding the scope of human action and what might accrue from it. But I must pass on.

MODERN HINDU THINKERS

An attempt will be made to show that the innovative thinking of 'non-professionals' in the modern era took reflection on the problem of evil forward in unexpected ways – unexpected given the corpus of concepts thrown up by 'the tradition'. It is the thinkers of the so-called Renaissance that were bold enough to *specify* evils and regard them as targets for combat whether it be colonialism, poverty, superstition or the host of practices against which reformers took up cudgels in the nineteenth century. Lest it be thought that this was a purely ethical crusade, we have only to look at Bankim Chandra Chatterji's utilization of the myths of the people, in particular the people of Bengal, to recognize its religious quality. It hardly needs stressing that an activist interpretation of the *Gītā* enabled Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi to treat action other than as a means of adding to bondage.

This cleared the way for looking on bonds as factors to be fought rather than escaped or avoided. The problem of how separate karmic lines could permit of action to alleviate others' woes was met by a new stress on service (*seva*). The possibility of fighting evils jointly was a major development out of this insight. One could even say that it provided a measure of intellectual underpinning for the nationalist movement. Gandhi's distinction between evil and the evil-doer challenged a well-known teaching in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4, 4, 5): 'According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil.' His key concept in political philosophy – that of *satyāgraha* – centres around the notion that suffering voluntarily undergone is not evil but contains persuasive power.

If it be objected that the undergoing of voluntary suffering also characterized the life-style of the traditional ascetic it would be pertinent to recall that there is a big difference between asceticism undergone for the sake of individual self-perfection and the *tapasya* which is aimed at converting the heart of the 'adversary', changing unjust structures and shifting the balance of forces in situations which are in a state of gridlock.

Gandhi used several synonyms for the word 'evil', e.g. what is *adharma, nāpāk* or unholy or satanic (the last of these could have been derived from evangelical vocabulary or from William Blake). Gandhi was confident that men could rise to heights of great heroism, but he was rather less able to see that there were also immense depths to which they could fall. This provides the ground of his disagreement with Martin Buber in respect of the tragic events on the Continent in the twentieth century.[5] The scale of calamities and catastrophes that can take place in the human world is no doubt described in

the epic literature. But if creation and destruction are to be expected in recurring sequences does this not blunt the edge of disaster, encouraging a sweeping up of *sufferings* under the general rubric of *suffering*? Yet the reformist thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *in spite* of 'the tradition', had an eye for individual sufferings, and strengthened an activist interpretation of *karma* which had always been implicit in its open-ended character but tended to be overlaid by the sense of the dead weight of past *karmas*. But did any of them have any conception of radical evil (*Böse*) as against woe (*Übel*)? Tagore perhaps did, in his paintings and his last poems.

CONCLUSION

We return then to the concepts of good and evil. It is primarily to Plato that we owe the insight that the ultimate in metaphysics and religion is also the ultimate in ethics. When thought through, the implications are startling. The True and the Good (no less than the Beautiful) cannot but be one and the same. If so, then the False (cf. Gandhi's 'untruth') and the Evil are likewise the same. The insights of the Hindu sages, if one does not do them an injustice by generalizing, are rather different. Logical considerations prompt the standpoint that what is beyond good and evil cannot properly bear the epithet good. We are often told, however, that even so, the ultimate is *sattvika* rather than otherwise. But strictly speaking, that of which we speak in venturing to say anything at all of the ultimate, is not *sattvika* either in that this term bears the implication of contrast with two others.

Now since time began, more than one cultural basket has borne a shadowy intimation into the possibility that light might *contain* darkness. The cosmos provides the root metaphor out of which this intimation springs. The twenty-four-hour cycle contains both day and night, and 'day' often means the whole twenty-four hours rather than just the hours of daylight. Is this not why, in order to speak of evil, poets have had to invoke a principle *banished* from the firmament, fallen from the sphere of light into *outer* darkness, something far more terrible than the darkness which, as a daily occurrence, gnaws into the light only to disappear and reappear? Falsehood/the Lie, consists in a rupture of truth, just as evil consists in a rupture of good. To admit the reality of radical evil is to probe an abyss which yawns beyond the natural polarity of light and darkness. It requires recognition of an outer darkness into which human beings can sink and from which evil erupts through their deeds. I now pose the question that must come next. Were Indian thinkers at all familiar with the distinction between *Übel* and *Böse?* Or was a worldview that tended either to stoicism or to celebration one which passed this by?

I cannot answer the question I have posed, but will approach it obliquely. Let me invoke my original metaphor of a loose texture, reminding myself that pulling together loose threads may have the effect of rendering a fabric thin or even tattered. In the many-structured mansions of Hindu culture, philosophical thinking is not necessarily the key to the rest, important though it be as a *phenomenon* partially revelatory of the culture concerned.

In any case Hindu philosophical thought is fascinatingly diverse. While in some cultures philosophical thought appears to break from the realm of myth 'successfully' (a process which, in my view, often impoverishes it), the root metaphors embedded in language still resonate with the life-experiences of generations long forgotten. In recalling the names of ancestors on ritual occasions the Hindu overtly recognizes a presence which on other occasions still speaks through idiom, gesture and attitude. Shifting analogies, we explore a palimpsest (as Nehru once remarked in writing of India's history), different layers of which reveal themselves to the explorer, but none of which are totally erased from archetypal consciousness.

The dualism of the Persians sprang out of the starkness of their life in the desert. It had no appeal for the people of Āryavarta for whom light filtered through the trees of the forest in endless multiplicity of dappled forms and for whom diversity and unity were eventually to surface as major thought-forms. The factuality of human suffering appeared all the more paradoxical in conditions of relative plenitude (conditions which rarely obtained in desert life away from the great river-systems). Now a pluralist worldview readily accommodates contrary powers which in turn are also seen to be plural. The unitary terms formulated generations later through abstract thought represent a strenuous pulling together of elements already deeply rooted in everyday experience. It so happened that in undertaking this exercise with reference to the surd elements in life the resulting concept for the Hindus was not 'evil' but 'suffering'. This product of the churning of minds is eloquent and poignant witness to the rooting of Hindu thought in *Erlebnisse*, something not sufficiently granted by those who detect therein mainly speculative excursion. Is it not a fact that human life is beset with sufferings?

What I would like to draw attention to next is the *leap* of thinking accomplished by the reformist men of the Indian Renaissance, given the tradition they inherited, and the circumstance that even the impact of Persian and Muslim thought had not brought about any such leap. From one point of view their particularization of sufferings, in the working out of strategies for combating them, recaptures the pluralist insights of pre-philosophical times. But there was more. The analysis of specific sufferings enabled them to diagnose the causes of ills and discontents, to pinpoint the loci of wrongs, to lay bare the structure of institutions which needed changing. In so doing they virtually paralleled the labours of reformers in other parts of the world, and here I refer to the unpacking of 'evil' into 'evils' to be identified and combated.

Now the treatment of suffering and sufferings, evil and evils, is part of a wider considerations, that of 'spirituality', another term for which we seek in vain a precise Hindu equivalent.[6] But this much seems clear – in treating of evil/suffering we are at grips with human life itself, including its heights and depths. Most cultural baskets accommodate a cosmic dimension herein, even those which seem to have abandoned it. For no *Bildung* can be without a mytho-poeic element. The surd elements in life present themselves today both in terms of intransigence and opportunity, despair and hope, polarities which persist to the end, defying synthesis. Looking back at the whole caravan of

concepts which make their way through Hindu intellectual history in respect of these surd elements we discover a perception of the human dilemma which is second to none in terms of subtlety. It comes to terms with the dilemma in a distinctive way which calls for understanding against the background of an entire spiritual landscape' and which defies assimilation in thought patterns of an alien form.

NOTES

1 See B.K. Matilal, *Logical and Ethical Issues of Religious Belief*, University of Calcutta, 1982.

2 *The Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism*, Oxford University Press, 1977.

3 Cf. the Buddhist thesis '*duḥkha-duḥkha, anityatā-duḥkha, samskāra-duḥkha*'.

4 *The Principal Upaniṣads*, London, 1953, pp. 113 ff.

5 See my *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends*, Macmillan, 1992, pp. 115 ff.

6 See my *The Concept of Spirituality*, Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1987.

7 See my use of this phrase in the above and also in my *The Religious Spectrum*, Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1984.

Chapter 12

A Hermeneutic Excursion

INTRODUCTION

What I shall try to do in this chapter falls somewhere between phenomenological description and *Kulturkritik*. It seems to me that, *vis-à-vis* the context in which thinkers like Heidegger, Jaspers, Gadamer and Ricoeur have evolved their ideas, two characteristics stand out about the Indian situation; firstly, that it is not the case that linguistic worlds have priority, and secondly, that we exist in the midst of traditions from which only recently a sense of alienation[1] begins to show itself. These two points require some defence. I shall take the matter of linguisticity first.

It is, I think, true to say that the contemporary practitioner of hermeneutics spends more time on literary texts[2] than on any other type of cultural expression. This itself is evidence of a stress on linguisticity. We owe this to a cluster of factors including the origin of the hermeneutic method in Biblical scholarship, the interest of the Romantics in philology, developments in linguistics and semiology, and the general proliferation of the written word since the Gutenberg revolution. Philosophy has yet to catch up with the revolution taking place in the audio-visual media. The fact remains that we are all still dominated by words, believing them to provide the most convenient nets in which to capture things and people[3]. The Naiyāyikas past and present are in this company, and no one would deny that Indian intellectual life over the centuries has thrown up texts in plenty. But one would be audacious, indeed, who tried to glean an understanding of Indian culture from written texts alone. In spite of the prevalence of *Śāstras*, canons and written documents of a daunting kind, it is, I believe, from other sources that we can learn most about the lifeworlds of the Indian people. Of all these sources, two are of crucial importance – works of art and human behaviour. These constitute texts, in an extended sense if you will, in the sense that they need decoding, that people react to them differently, and there is considerable difference between the insider's and the outsider's view. The *anonymity* of architecture, in particular, makes this a useful field for investigation, freeing us in large part from tangles regarding intentionality and the like. I have written elsewhere[4] on the importance of non-linguistic aspects of Indian culture and shall not enlarge on this general theme here.

The distinction which it seems to me needs to be made between traditions which are living, those which are well-nigh lost in antiquity, and those which may be alive but are unfamiliar to us, triggers reflection. Many have suggested that the hermeneutic task begins with a sense of alienation, or alternatively, in reaction to a decline in the binding power of tradition. Behind such a view, once more, lurks a concern with textuality, whence stems the problem of construal. This very way of putting it echoes the Romantic task of

recovery of the classics. But how much distancing takes place when it is the tradition which is familiar? The question is of some interest in a society which is only partly traditional and where it is common experience to be embedded in a particular traditional lifeworld, be aware of other traditions flourishing at one's doorstep, and be beckoned by yet another vaguely described as modernity. Indian attitudes to tradition, multiple as this is in a culturally diverse country, are currently deeply ambivalent. There have always been multiple mirrors in which people could look at themselves with resultant nostalgia/envy/xenophobia or whatever.

We might at this point ask why distancing is deemed to be integral to the hermeneutic starting point. Helmut Plessner has suggestions to make in this regard. His plea for seeing with other eyes[5] goes further than stressing the importance of distance in *time* and highlights the role of alienated *situations* in promoting understanding. It seems to me that such a view flows from two sources. The first is the general perception of the role of crises which we find in the *Existenzphilosophie* and *Existenztheologie* of the thirties and forties. The second source has deeper roots and stems from a perspectivism which can be dated from Newton's *Optics*, runs through Leibniz's monadology and reappears as non-spatial perspectivism in twentieth century hermeneutics. The visual root metaphor dies hard. In Newton and Leibniz it is 'redeemed' by the Divine point of view which was believed to provide the *correct* horizon. Notably it was thought that God was capable of being in more than one place at a time. Vision is the distance sense which is concerned with spatial awareness. Transfer vision from space to time and we find 'point of view', the perspective appropriate to consciousness turned on history. The visual root metaphor, however, continues. The perspectives hopefully converge; indeed the phenomenon investigated is believed to be precisely the point of convergence[6]. The irony is that the model this gives us is analogous to the one provided by Russell's theory of perception, a theory intended to rescue sensible perception from subjectivity, that is to say, it amounts to an avowed attempt to reinstate objectivity from a field in which it had almost been lost.

The crux quite clearly is how to deal with the scandal of the subject and how to deal with time. But this cannot be dealt with by reintroducing objectivity of a kind which those who deal with the human sciences after Husserl's *Krisis* have presumably left behind. I suspect that the metaphors of convergence of horizon still trail clouds from visual experience, and experiences moreover of a linear kind, in spite of the fact that these metaphors have been employed most of all in the interpretation of literary texts.

In what follows I shall offer for consideration some hypotheses relevant to Indian art. *Inter alia* I shall suggest that convergence can be replaced by an image that goes in the opposite direction, i.e. movement from a centre outwards and for which initially kinaesthetic experience[7] and then vegetative growth provide paradigms. Indian art forms (and here I refer to the indigenously Indic, i.e. Hindu, Jain, Buddhist) often puzzle the observer with their rich profusion. There is much to take into account, the apparent lack of perspective (I say apparent, because perspective certainly shows itself in some

of the paintings), the abundance of detail on the exterior of temples rather than on the interior, the bustle and noise around them, the flatness of much of the paintings, the repetitiveness of the music. The features which strike those coming to Indian art forms with a familiarity with something different could be multiplied.

Presumably an Indian art work 'makes sense' of the world in its own way. The anonymity of Indian art until the modern era lends support to the view that the key to it lies not so much in a personal vision as in broad cultural patterns which are to be found outside the sphere of art as well. We can therefore hunt for the clues to an interpretation of Indian art throughout the tapestry of multiple Indian *Lebenswelten*. The *Vorurteile* are often gestural, ways of comporting oneself in the world. Greeting with folded hands, taking the dust of a senior's feet are 'environed by the unexpressed'[8]. In saying this, I am stressing the non-linguistic character of Indian *Zugehoerigkeit*.[9]

Earlier[10] I have suggested that the Indian lifeworld, speaking generally, bears the mark of a sense of the surrounding – the forest, the plains – a primeval experience which gave birth to a 'circular' set of metaphors of which the wheel, the lotus, the mandala, the cycle of seasons and the cycle of births and deaths are notable examples. Nature, rather than mathematics, is the matrix out of which the root ideas spring. This being so, we do not have to choose between space and time as an axis for our metaphysical thinking (we do not have to choose, say, between Descartes and Heidegger) for nature is so obviously spatio-temporal and so also is man's existence within it. Matters concerning diet and clothing, activities proper to different stages in life, rites of passage – all are carefully regulated in accordance with the principle of recurrence for which nature herself is the matrix.

Change is assimilated within a kaleidoscopic pattern, and what appears at first sight as an absence of historical sense shows itself as historical in an idiosyncratic way, where change is chronicled not in distinct succession so much as in a palimpsest where earlier forms are not completely obliterated but can be glimpsed through what earlier generations have left behind. The metaphor of sedimentation provides another equally useful clue. The strata lie on top of each other, but as in the case of geological formation, what lies beneath is often visible in the form of an upthrust.

Now one cannot have the surroundings, the circular, without a centre and we do, indeed, find the phenomenon of centrality well illustrated in Indian architecture and sculpture[11] – an expansion from world to cosmos whose *leitmotif* is celebration. This celebratory context involves both nature and history, and in so doing, I venture to suggest, enables us to avoid the *Erklaeren / Verstehen* controversy. The thatness, the monumentality of architectural art works, (I overlook for the moment the fact that monumentality as a quality is something a building may or may not possess) brings us back to the total *Gestalt* in whatever light, for example, we may view the sculptured façade, say, of the temples of Khajuraho. We scarcely run the risk, as appreciators, of a Schilleresque free aesthetic play.

I would also hazard to say that the historical consciousness does not serve us too falsely in the understanding and appreciation of Indian temple architecture. The reason is this. Temples continue to be 'used' as they have been for centuries. In watching the crowds at the temple of Jagannath, Puri, we are not up against the insurmountable otherness of the past but witnessing something which is *continuous* with the past. I do not deny that one may observe it with a sense of its being utterly alien to one's own aesthetic/religious/cultural traditions.

Let us take a Jain temple as an example. As far as perspectivism in epistemology is concerned, there is no system of Indian philosophy which provides this to the extent that Jainism does. It was Jainism that inspired Gandhi's belief that all visions of the truth are fragmentary. In Jaina shrines, ceilings, walls, door-frames and pillars show an exuberance of scenes from Jaina mythology. There are voids in elevation, window openings, and circumambulatory paths on which light shines from the window above. An interesting example of an aggregation of shrines around a central one is found in the Tribhuvana-Dīpaka-Caturmukha-Jinālaya at Ranakpur in old Jodhpur State. Direct and reflected light make this interesting architecturally, and it also serves to illustrate my point about centrality.

The *siddha-cakra* (circle of the sacred ones) also illustrates this principle. A bronze tablet worshipped by the *Śvetāmbara* sect is in the form of an eight-petalled lotus. The eye falls on the *arhat* (enlightened one) in the centre, surrounded by other emancipated souls. The postures of each are significant, but the focus is on the qualities each is believed to embody. The projection at the bottom allows ablution water to drain out.

Now it so happens that those who go to Jaina temples/shrines are usually Jainas (cf. those who visit cathedrals, and even Hindu temples, such being the nature of the tourist industry). Perambulations, mounting of staircases, etc., are therefore, for the most part, in the context of religious exercises. The unseeing eyes of the *Tirthankaras* speak of the one who has succeeded in overcoming external distraction. Jaina architecture and sculpture certainly seem to survive in a context where religious symbolism still functions in a religious context and where the objects concerned do not serve as museum pieces but still 'make sense' for those who experience them participatively.

So far our Jaina examples have illustrated the principle of profusion stemming from a centre, a vegetative metaphor of growth the source of which is the seed. I put this forward as a hermeneutic tool which pulls in a different way from the optically-grounded metaphor of convergence. Before we leave this point, the role of intersubjectivity, of community, in each, needs to be mentioned. The idea of expansion from a centre is already rooted in the community whose *Lebenswelt* is given expression in the temple. The community is the matrix, and the temple is the focus of the communicative network which already exists. Architecture, I have already suggested, has an advantage over the text with respect to its physical location, the way it anchors us to the world, and its limited hospitality to multiple meanings (the *Spielraum* of these meanings has a particular range). Interpretations of a literary text, however,

jostle for consensus, as it were, (this is particularly the case in the interpretations of scripture given by Protestant sects) giving birth to a communicative network among those who agree with a particular set of meanings.

I next wish to turn to the problem of 'misunderstanding', using, *en passant*, the Jaina example mentioned already.

MISUNDERSTANDING[12]

Probably the first person to discuss the notion of misunderstanding in the context of the theory of interpretation was Chladenius.[13] His chair being in theology, rhetoric and poetry, his concerns were with textuality, and he believed 'complete understanding' to be possible. He drew a distinction between willful misrepresentation and misunderstanding or false interpretation, but also made room for cases where an interpretation falls short of certainty, the requisite evidence being lacking. We would these days, I imagine, set a question mark against the notion of 'complete understanding'. Once it is granted that the art object is open to multiple interpretations we tend to resist the idea of a 'correct interpretation' and 'complete understanding' alike.
But we also face interesting puzzles about 'getting things wrong', 'not being quite on target' and so on.[14] If to admit multiple meanings is not to permit that 'anything goes', we seem to need a principle of exclusion which will serve to delimit a reasonable *Spielraum* of interpretations. Quite evidently there can be no such *general* principle. Even the appeal to 'competent judges' will not do, for there can be radical differences of opinion among those deemed competent to judge, and these days, quirky viewpoints often pass muster as legitimate criticism in the arts.

We need also to distinguish between 'misunderstanding' and 'understanding incompletely'. The arts apart, there are plenty of analogies for this in everyday life. Take the case of the overseas visitor in search of a 'quiet restaurant' in the States, who enters what he imagines to be an ideal place and orders a meal from the very superior sort of 'waiter' who asks him what he would like. Alas, he has made a radical mistake, for he has entered a funeral parlour. He hasn't got any bit of it 'right'. It is not that he needs to know 'more' but that he is totally mistaken about where he is.

We also need to distinguish between misunderstanding and radical criticism. There might be contemporary critics who find Rāma's treatment of Sītā incompatible with what we these days recognize as women's dignity, or who deplore the stereotype of females as creatures that twine and cling, a stereotype portrayed both in classical Indian sculpture and dance. I would call this *Kulturkritik* and not misunderstanding. The very antiquity of Jainism raises teasing considerations. Some Jaina images look very much like *yakṣas*,[15] while others resemble the Buddha. No doubt, for example, the artists of ancient Magadh had to hand images of *yakṣas* to serve as models. This is a matter of artistic exigency rather than religious sensibility. I suspect it is only the art historian who will find that the *yakṣa* idea is encapsulated in many Jaina figures. The devotees' sights will be set on other matters, and perhaps

properly so. The Jain worshippers are distanced in time from the worshippers of centuries ago.

However, in so far as they participate in a live tradition, they cannot be said to be distanced from it, still less alienated. There will always be more to know, more to understand. For the traditional worshipper the epistemic element, the knowing, is embedded in a whole cluster of affective, evaluative and other modalities of consciousness, and, equally importantly, in ritual behaviour which expresses all these. If he or she is unaware of the artistic tradition, which through the *yakṣa* idea, roots Jain iconography in a world of earth gods and goddesses, this is not a *Missverstaendnis* so much as an unknowing or even a forgetting. Such a forgetting is, in some contexts, even a benefit. The devout communicant might be disturbed if he recalled the significance of totemic participatory meals at the moment of participating in the Eucharist.

IN CONCLUSION

What do I tentatively conclude from the above? That participant-understanding of a live tradition may be partial; it may show differences from the participant-understanding of an earlier generation (I do not know how one would determine this difference) but, as far as I can see, it would illustrate neither 'distancing' nor fusion of horizons, but a continuity which would accommodate both change and encapsulation of the experience of earlier generations. I think we can find examples where distance in time helps and also where it presents obstacles. The advantage of distance in time is felt, tangentially, as it were, when contemporary art works strike us as opaque. We imagine, for example, that we are better able to evaluate Cézanne than were his contemporaries. But temporal distance is not necessarily an aid to understanding. Collingwood's analysis of the process of question and answer grew out of the intrinsic *difficulty* of interpreting archaeological data.

In choosing temple architecture for comment I have admittedly chosen a complicated example where the 'object' is viewed aesthetically by the outsider, and religiously or aesthetico-religiously[16] by the participant. At any rate, we can glean the following – the art-buff or art-historian may well 'know' more than the worshipper, but the worshipper is not at disadvantage in his/her worship by being inadequately conversant with his/her own tradition. Does it make sense to speak of someone 'misunderstanding' his own tradition? One answer to this is that sometimes the tradition itself accommodates such deviance. What is more to the point is to recognize to which tradition can contain much that is monstrous. This is something that Jaspers, Raja Rammohun Roy and Gandhi in their various ways were very sensitive.

To the extent that hermeneutic awareness is developing in the cultural sciences in India today, it witnesses to a sense that the sedimented meanings of the past need to be approached selectively. Now the sedimented experience of generations amounts to something very like an *a priori*, provided we take *a priori* to mean 'determining condition' and not, à la Kant, 'free from any empirical element'. It is also worth recalling another use of *a priori* mentioned

by the Bengali philosopher, Ras Vihari Das, *avidyā* as *a priori*. He wanted to draw attention, I think, to the *Zusammenhang* between phenomenality and bondage. I would myself consider that *avidyā* was illuminated by the shaft of light that comes from aesthetic, moral and religious experience. To say, as I have, that contemporary consciousness recognizes the need to *choose* among sedimented meanings makes the latter similar to what Habermas called 'transitory *a prioris*' a phrase he uses with reference to history and language.[17]

But the problem is that whenever we speak of tradition we are referring to what has *grown*, to processes which were not always the result of choice. Consequently, when we pick and choose at will, we are engaging in an activity which, although natural to the reformer, policy-maker, or artist, may have little impact on society as a whole.

The way in which meanings are 'trailed' willy-nilly has a linguistic parallel which might be mentioned here. Diverse conceptual structures are 'carried over' historically through the use of the 'same' words from generation to generation. In his review of Kittel's *Theological Dictionary*,[18] James Barr criticized the editors for summing up diverse meanings drawn from a word's usage in various contexts, and for assuming that whenever the word occurs it contains within it all its other meanings. His shorthand for the 'defect' is 'illegitimate totality transfer'.

Words, practices, indeed the manifold 'expressions' of cultural life, have their resonances. Of course we cannot hear them all. This could be developed with reference to the Indian concept of *dhvani* which has importance both in music and in the role of suggestion in literature. It occurs to me that this concept might parallel that of horizon. But suffice it to say that the musician often has to *control* resonance, and the writer needs to *control* suggestion, in the interest of protecting overall intention.

One residual question might still tantalize. What is this centrality which I have suggested as the source of so many Indian cultural expressions? There are those who will maintain that it is a metaphysical core of a rarefied kind, the Self understood in a monistic way. This is what you find in Abhinavagupta's image of the needle which penetrates successive layers of lotus leaves in the pursuit of *Bewusstseinslagen*. It is also the main tenor of Coomaraswamy's understanding of Indian art. But for my own part, I tend to find the source of the metaphor of expansion from a centre in the life-experience of India's agricultural people – the simple experience of growth. This lifeworld encapsulates *Bewusstseinslagen* which are shared by village communities, whether or not they ever reach the level of conceptuality. The agricultural year with its manifold 'messages' of seed-time and harvest, aging and decay, adverse seasons and calm weather, the celebration of festivals, the canny local criticism built into the *jātrā* (village open-air drama) – all witness to the changing tonalities of a life in which the centre still holds.

When Gandhi takes over the metaphor and speaks of the oceanic circle with the individual at the centre, but the individual in relation to others, *Gemeinschaft* rippling out in concentric circles to cover the whole world, what has happened is that recognition of the compatibility of individuality

with increasingly wide areas of social allegiance has been built into a metaphor which was originally vegetative in inspiration. It speaks for the potency of the metaphor, I think, that it is capable of relating the cosmic to the social and the ethical, something which, heaven knows, in our day and generation, needs doing.

NOTES

1 Cf. Gadamer's definition of hermeneutics as: 'The theory and practice of understanding and bringing to language, the alien, the strange, and whatever has become alien.' *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. F.G. Lawrence, Cambridge,MS, & London, the M.I.T. Press, 1982, p.149.

2 'Texts' actually have a wide range – including scripture, laws, musical scores, choreographic designs etc.

3 George Steiner has written on this most convincingly.

4 See my *The Religious Spectrum*, Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1984.

5 H. Plessner, "*Mit anderen Augen*", *Zwischen Philosophie und Gesellschaft*, Francke, Berne, 1953, pp.204; 17.

6 The spatial archetype of convergence seems to me to be the Gothic spire. Compare this with the *stūpa,* which is not pointed. It tapers but never fails to incorporate diversity. The message of growth from *loka* to *loka* is indicated cannily.

7 Cf. Husserl's reference to the '…..practical kinaesthetic horizon', *Husserliana*, Vol.XI, p.15.

8 An expression used by Hans Lipps with reference to words. Cf. *Untersuchungen zu einer hermeneutischen Logik*, Frankfurt, 1938, p.71.

9 This is in contrast to Gadamer's stress on the *Zusammenhang* of language with this. See *Truth and Method*, pp. 115 ff.142, 232.

10 See ch. 4, 'Towards a phenomenology of circumstance'.

11 It can also be found in the strong tonality of Indian classical music, where the elaboration of themes centres round the tonic and never fails to return to it.

12 Schleiermacher defined hermeneutics as the art of overcoming misunderstanding.

13 *Introduction to the Correct Interpretation of Reasonable Discourses and Writings*, Leipzig, 1742.

14 I have touched on this in my 'Some philosophical problems arising in the arts', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Wayne University, Vol. XXVIII, Spring, 1969.

15 Earth deities, massive in aspect, sculpted frontally, and not in the round. A *yakṣa* and a *yakṣinī* stand outside the Reserve Bank building in New Delhi, it so happens.

16 This last possibility may not be true for the Jaina, for Jainism enjoins in a particularly stringent manner the leaving behind of the sensuous. Temple architecture in India, as mentioned earlier, symbolizes what is to be left behind, by providing highly decorated *exteriors*.

17 See his *Towards a Rational Society,* trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, Boston, 1970, p.84. For the need to recognize a meshing of the transcendental, empirical and ontological see my *Our Knowledge of Other Selves,* Asia Publishing, Bombay, 1963 and article on 'The grounds and horizons of philosophical imagination', in *Philosophes sur eux-mêmes,* Berne, Vol. 10, 1983.

18 G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.) *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament,* Stuttgart, 1933-73, I have commented on this point in my Teape lectures in Cambridge University, *The Concept of Spirituality,* Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1989.

Chapter 13

Self-understanding, Otherness and Peace

There are thinkers who link up being at peace with oneself, living peacefully with one's neighbours and the possibility of a peaceful world. On such a view, states of war are seen as evidence of something radically wrong with what goes on at the micro level, and the remedy envisaged involves a *metabasis eis allo genos* of an ethical if not religious kind within each individual himself. If we think on these lines, a peaceful world is a kind of Platonic idea, if not a utopia, but something towards which one can contribute one's mite by bettering human relations, beginning with oneself and one's immediate associates.

The whole matter seems closely tied up with 'otherness' in the human sphere, how much of it is inevitable, how much we *want* and so on. If this seems a *non sequitur*, think of the extent to which, in states of war, we think in terms of 'us' and 'them', 'ours' and 'theirs'. A smile might be raised by the following. During World War II Johnny sees planes going over while he is in the garden and hears Mrs. Jones next door say to her neighbours, "It's all right. They're ours". Johny goes indoors and says to his mother "Don't worry, Mum. They're the Jones's". Warfare after all represents human polarization to the extreme limit of hostility and the implementing of strategies of elimination. The 'others' '*stehen gegen*' as if they were *objects*, to be bulldozed, wiped out. We no longer think of "the others" as flesh and blood, as *human*, at all. They have become *radically* and well-nigh irretrievably 'other'.

And yet otherness is a very real part of our lives; and I speak of human otherness. The "intra-dialogic" situation enables me to understand myself. You continue to 'inhabit' my being when you are not physically present, and even when, through death, you *can* no longer be physically present at all. Being at peace with myself and with you involves a strange coming to terms with otherness. Not that this is not often fraught with difficulty, even with conflict. The sweet friction of love apart, there are other frictions which pose constant challenges to togetherness. And here we come to something important. Togetherness involves not an overcoming of otherness but an enjoyment of it.

Do we not experience enjoyment of otherness at the collective level when we travel abroad? "How quaint/how delightful/how intriguing", we exclaim. All this is on the surface, you may say. The others are actually very grasping/insular/ bellicose/barbaric and this is confirmed to the hilt when we are at war and have the full-fledged hostile experience of "us" and "them". I don't wish to extrapolate in any simple-minded manner from individual relationships to what happens between countries. Quite obviously, inter-state relations bring in factors to do with power (these can be present at the interpersonal level too), ideological differences, the machinations of politicians, armaments manufacturers, financiers and the rest. All I shall do is to go back

to where otherness seems to obtrude; and to examine in an almost lay fashion how we, in fact, comport ourselves in face of the 'other' in the realm of persons. I shall use a near-confessional and colloquial manner in an attempt to break through some of the stereotyped ways of thinking that philosophical language imposes on us. But first a philosophical reminder may not be out of place.

It is a commonplace that many post-Cartesian philosophers, and phenomenologists in particular in more recent times, have found Cartesianism wanting in terms of two bridges, the bridge from the I to nature and the bridge from I to you, both of which seem to be needed if Cartesianism be accepted. Behaviourism is bold in its attempt to find in how we comport ourselves a way of eliminating the need for either bridge. If the putative bridge between selves and nature generates what is, quite possibly (I am not taking sides) the pseudo problem of perception, the second generates, *inter alia*, something rather different, an uneasy relationship between *disciplines*, namely philosophy and the social sciences. The two sets of difficulties, (let us restyle them as the old chestnut of 'our knowledge of the external world' on the one hand and the relationship between man and culture on the other), are rather different in kind. Yet both have a certain artificiality from the point of view of the man in the street and philosophers in their non-philosophical moments. Normally we perceive pillar-boxes and avoid colliding with them. This example illustrates both perception and behaviour, and indeed perception per se is an artificially abstracted moment from a total situation in which behaviour of some kind or other is rarely absent. But the plot can thicken.

Let us be more philosophical. Is there a puzzle about one subject knowing another subject and a single subject knowing himself? I doubt it. Why? Because *subjects* aren't in the picture. It is *persons* who interact; our histories intersect. Let us look at the examples. They have all been cast in the first person. How is that possible? What is an autobiography about and how does it differ from biography or from fiction? In an autobiography the writer speaks about himself in a sequential manner. Even then there are lots of gaps. The writer may find the years between 1930 and 1933 so uneventful in his case that he decides not to mention them. The Freudian critic may subsequently unearth clues in happenings which the writer chose not to mention. But what happens if you try to tell everything? For one thing you can't. Memory fails you, whether for Freudian reasons or not. Writing an autobiography/a confessional, is a form of self-understanding. Talking to you in the subway is a form of self-understanding, as well as a way of understanding you. In this ball game the ball is passed to and fro, or should be if it is conducted in a civilized fashion. Otherwise I feel you are using me, or vice versa. In friendship we allow each other this privilege. Now it's your turn. Tell me what it was like. In doing so you tell me what *happened*. This is what happened in the office/park/train. This is what he said, and this how I felt and how I feel now. You can't tell me about yourself without bringing in the others in the story. They may be marginal. They may not be. Autobiographical writing puts it all down in a readable shape. It must be interesting, too. Before, autobiographies were usually

about interesting/important people. Now there can be an autobiography by a bum and it can be written skillfully. We get inside his skin. We say yes, that's how life is. Or we identify with unfamiliarity, to get out of ourselves.

You said 'I'm me, and you're you'. Let's see what this means. 'I'm me', you say, and it means you. I say it, and I mean me. How odd there doesn't seem to be a word like 'me' for you (in English anyway). When I say 'you' I am addressing you. When I say 'I'm me' I may be just talking to myself, reassuring myself perhaps. 'I'm me' indicates both what I have become and what I am. Or rather I am what I have become. I think about it and realize that if I hadn't met so and so, I wouldn't have been in this country/town/job, married to so and so. What I am is both a function of what happened to me and what happened to others, what I did to others and lots more. To understand myself I have to take all this in, and there's no end to it because you're also doing the same thing and a lot of the time we seem to be part of joint histories. It's also like a play. We talk to each other, not on the stage, but in real life. Our lives are interconnected.

The biographer is different in that he takes up a third person stance. He is not interpreting each to the other; he may be writing about eighteenth century characters after all, and they are dead and gone, but he is in some sense interpreting them to us. He may be undertaking an exercise in self-understanding in so doing, but he certainly enables *us* to do so. The whole narrative goes through the filter of our own self-understanding and we say, 'that was a moving book'. You may prefer a fictional narrative to a biography. I like a good story/a happy ending/I want to be taken out of myself. I read Jane Austen and find myself on the wrong wave-length. How awful for marriage to be the only career in sight for nearly all her female characters. I am indignant/sympathetic/I look at my own situation/I am shaken up. Fiction can bring about self-understanding. And what about letters? What a lot of experiences you and I share through our letters.

Let us go back to our first person anecdotes. Each of these could be written by any of the 'other characters' e.g. 'Today I saw B behaving in a peculiar way, going near the pillar box, then suddenly turning round and crossing the road. It looked as if she didn't want to speak to me. I wonder why'. All these anecdotal accounts centre around an incident which can be interpreted variously by each of the characters. Now it may be granted that mostly we shrug off such incidents and go on our way. It's almost as if incidents vary in 'importance' in our histories. But why do I say 'histories' rather than 'autobiographies' or 'biographies'? Perhaps because I want to stress the on-going character of all that I am involved in and concerned with. When this comes to an end you may write my biography if you wish. I cannot write it. But you may get it all wrong. What would getting it all wrong be like? Seeing things in a different way from the way I saw them. But then, *of course*, your viewpoint will be different from mine because you are not me. So you cannot 'get it wrong'??

Let's come to the question about intersecting of histories. The Clapham junction model may be too mechanistic or too teleological. Incidentally, it

could be both – going on the rails and going *somewhere*. My self-understanding is illuminated by all these intersections and parallel lines. I have been affected in ways you have no idea of. You never knew how much I learnt from your example in 1965. I cannot think of a single instance where my self-understanding has not been mediated through my relation with you. All the various prepositional stances possible between us, e.g. 'against', 'with,' etc. bring out the otherness without which my self-understanding could not possibly take place. What am I understanding in this self-understanding? I am understanding how deeply empirical our relationships are, for 'relation' here means relationship, but also how deeply ontological they are. When there is a trans-empirical shaft of light, this might come about through a sudden sense of togetherness, I don't find any hint of identity in it. I find, on the contrary, delight in otherness, delight that you are you. I cannot be delighted that I am I or that I am me. (Walt Whitman and I differ in this respect). This is for you to experience if our relationship warrants it. Then I shall be humbly grateful. It is enough for me that you are you. I would be committing the sin of drawing you into the net of my orbit if I said that I am you or that you are me, nor can I fathom why anyone should ever want to say either of these things. Through you I am not luminous to myself, for I am constantly on the move and there are many opacities, but my life is enriched through what we share and continue to share. Identity would rule out sharing. Sometimes cultural peculiarities make it necessary for me to vocalize what I am about e.g. I need to tell you why I walk barefoot here, why I cover my head before So and So. In so doing I help you to enter more fully into my life, and I reinforce my own way of life at the same time. I am equally anxious to enter into yours.

My reticences, and yours, are important though. There are things I cannot tell you because you may not understand, and it would be painful to bare myself. Nor is my self-understanding ever complete. Why did I say what I did? I did not mean it, or did I? Even then I shouldn't have said hurtful things. Can I say that it is more important that I should understand you than that I should understand myself? Behaviourally this may be so. But both are important. Neither is possible without the other. There is an inbuilt reflexivity about the whole business. Otherness is the key. And I cannot conceive of even the *desirability* of overcoming it, let alone its possibility.

There are many traps in the words 'subjectivity' and 'intersubjectivity', for when we philosophize about these we are usually not talking about mere cognitive subjects over against objects at all. The picture can be corrected, to begin with, by bringing in all those philosophically neglected parts of ourselves which Hume wisely high-lighted – feelings, passions and all the elements which belong to the 'sensitive' part of our nature. If we do this, we are at least not talking about artificial subjects any more. The second corrective is provided by reminding ourselves that we rarely bother about 'selves' in ordinary discourse but think in terms of myself, yourself, himself, etc. This shift not only serves to wean us away from philosophical abstractions but to recall injunctions such as 'look after yourself,' where the focus is most surely on embodied being and not on any rarity such as 'the self'. The third

corrective is to bring the concept of 'you' into the discussion. I can address you, converse with you, resist you, appeal to you, live with you. There is no limit to ringing the changes. My own understanding of myself (significantly not my 'self') is mediated through myriad dyadic relationships which extend themselves into multiple relationships in the context of which I am constantly comporting myself. So absorbed am I with all this network of exchanges that when you address me suddenly I am often taken aback and I say 'Who? Me?' I have to re-collect myself from amidst all my multiple relationships in order to answer your questions: 'What would you like?' 'Shall we leave at 4 o'clock?' I come back to myself, a finite centre of consciousness (as the idealists used to call it), shaped by all my experiences and all of which are *me*.

I am not the centre of a circle from which I make forays, or which I am constantly enlarging, looping you into my charmed circularity. I am at the crossroads of all the relationships I have with the manifold 'you'. This is the manifold that is given. Putting it like this, one can see why I cannot *specify* this manifold any more than Kant could in the case of the manifold given to sensibility. I find this manifold given to me, for example, in the multiple relationships of the joint family. You ask me who I am. I answer that I am X's senior sister-in-law, Y's mother, Z's sister and so forth. These relationships embody the way I understand myself and the way all of you understand me.

In shifting discussion from the philosophy of consciousness to the philosophy of relationship (i.e. not mere relation) we are able to shuffle off those encumbrances called 'selves' and gain the world of human intercourse in which plurality is so radically affirmed. We become once more the 'people' we originally thought we were. The phenomenology of relationship leads to the lifeworld as we experience it, to the world of the novelist, dramatist and no less to what the social scientist investigates. Am I not a being over and above all these relationships? In answering this question in terms of being a writer, singer, traveller or whatever, I am still elucidating myself in relation to the manifold 'you'. This is what I am and who I am. But it is not a little, for my world is nurtured through a plenitude of other overlapping worlds. This is riches, indeed. The first line of one of Ricarda Huch's poems runs: 'Musik bewegt mich als ich denke Dein'. Without you I would hear no music at all.

Lifeworlds overlap. But do they not so often collide? Each inter-personal failure seems to reveal a deprivation of Being. Each act of war is a willful violation of the manifold 'you'. In working for peace we seek for an extension of allegiance, of faithfulness, which reflects the manifold 'you' to which we constantly relate ourselves and to which others relate themselves in their relations with us; further, in which we have our very being. Why is it more difficult to recognize the existence of the manifold 'you' than to grant the existence of the manifold of objects? History provides the record of the obstacles that have lain in the way. As in dyadic relations, incidents can provide turning points, misunderstandings can multiply, so that what undergoes an inner accretion is not togetherness, but apartness, a fissure in Being. One day the cracked porcelain might be unable to serve as a vessel. This is the shipwreck which in our century looms as a distinct possibility.

But there is another possibility. To change the metaphor, this possibility is of a wider harmony, wide enough to contain dissonance, wide enough to contain a multiplicity of voices. The orchestration has to be written out (and this is set us as a task), the parts played over and over again, each single voice true, each contrapuntal relation given its proper weight. The apparent immensity of the gulf between the personal and the public, a gulf which warfare closes up in its own terrible fashion, is bridged in a radically different way when self-understanding and love of the other serve as leaven in society.

Chapter 14

An Innocent Abroad in Disneyland

Some time ago I happened to see the illusion-generating use of laser technology (let us call it that for short) in one of the most popular fun-items in Disneyland – the Haunted House. The rapidly changing visual images, reinforced by weird sounds, are, of course, designed to trigger off a 'what's going to happen next' state of expectation in the observers. The latter, incidentally, are perhaps more correctly designated as observer-participants. Anyone who made up their mind *not* to be affected by the banshee wails, or the antics of the underground pirates of the Caribbean would have decided, I suppose, not to 'play' that particular game. Disneyland, no doubt, is a cultural phenomenon. Our lifeworlds can contain virtual worlds. We can see enactments of stories well known to all who are familiar with Walt Disney's gallery of cartoon characters. The whole thing is an extravaganza in which Americans also relive their past history, for example, the life of New Orleans a century ago, the coming of the railroad, the fast-shooting culture of the wild west. The trans-cultural phenomenon of pre-historic times is also presented. You sit in a mini-train which enters a magic cocoon-world inhabited by dinosaurs. If the dense green of the jungle and the erupting volcanoes evoke awe, the occasional yawn of one of the fearsome creatures relaxes tension and reassures young passengers that these are none other than the friendly animals they are familiar with through cartoon strips. Brer Bear, in historic reality a looming figure to be watched out for while the early settler felled trees to build his log cabin, is domesticated into a benign furry beastie strumming a banjo. Would that all things which go bump in the night could be so domesticated.

The total impression that any visitor may come away with could be of a variety of kinds. American culture, by reason of the affluence of the society it belongs to, makes more room for entertainment than cultures in which the struggle for survival dominates attention. I came away, among other things, struck by the thin line between illusion and reality. To see what happens to Mr. Toad in his wild rides in his new motor car is to have encapsulated lessons about the hazards of the automobile in a car-obsessed society, to learn how pride comes before a fall, and how old friends are those who patiently wait for their chum to come back to his senses. There is speech, no doubt, but the visual language predominates. The speed with which scenes succeed each other drives home a message which is made possible through the assemblage techniques of the cinema. Language is left behind. What is done, or what happens, is more important than what is said. The cartoon strip shows an uneasy tandem between words and frozen action. The modern child, used to comics, I suspect, is able to correlate the two better than an adult can. Looking at an illustration on a page and glancing back at the text, say, in reading a technical work on botany, requires a different skill from that of the comic strip imbiber, where reading and looking have to go along together. The Disneyland 'enact-

ments' have the further attraction of sounds among which words may take second place, coming after 'effects' such as lions growling, waves dashing on the shore, and so on. Disney uses techniques which were earlier prefigured to some extent in the *Gesammtswerk* of Wagner's operas.

If a visit to Disneyland reinforces the sense of the thin line between reality and illusion, history and the present, it also provides a sense of the power of non-linguistically mediated communication. Parallels could be found, I am sure, elsewhere and most definitely in the whole mimetic tradition of Indian dance forms. There is also a kinship between Disney's cartoon heroes and the animal heroes of Indian folklore. We are delighted to find that the humble are exalted (the mouse, the tortoise and the hare) and the mighty unseated (the bad wolf, the lion). The crafty and the cunning (the fox and the jackal) are hoist with their own petard. We are delighted because this is what we would like to have happen in 'real life'. The friendship between Tom and Jerry is poignant because the mouse is the natural prey of the cat. We would be in the utopian world portrayed in the Book of Isaiah if cats and mice could be friends. If fantasy takes us from reality in such an example, it also sends us back to reality with the thought that enmities might be overcome, the jackal might learn a lesson, and the humble mouse can be of use to the mighty, gnawing away the trapper's net. Above all, we enjoy a mythic society in which there are most unlikely friendships, and all through a medium of stereotypes through which, eventually, those very stereotypes are broken through.

What needs to be noted is that the contemporary media are already presenting us with a secondary world in which words may not be all-important, and a whole generation is growing up whose images of what is real are shaped by shifting sights and sounds, and where suggestion rather than statement is the order of the day. When Roland de Barthes, the French literary critic, insists that the discourse of the contemporary novel is not linear, he is saying something that is not only true of the novel. Contemporary art forms, whether sculpture, cinema, fiction or anything else, reveal kangaroo jumps, ball-bounces and unexpected juxtapositions. Our very lifeworlds make us familiar with aporias and disjunctions.

Now there is much in the visual extravaganza of Disneyland – remembering how near it is to Hollywood with its plethora of illusion-makers and how different these are from the ancient Celtic makers of dreams – that is joke-like. Perhaps there is something typically American about the phrase 'It's a fun thing to do'. The Viennese are noted for fun things to *say*, namely, puns and jokes. Humour is expressed verbally rather than visually, as in Disneyland. Now it seems to me that there are few things that can more pleasantly wean philosophers from over-attention to description than some little thought to the theme of jokes, because there is scarcely any other linguistic form (unless it be another neglected linguistic cousin – idioms) that throws up the relation between language and reality, especially social reality, in so total a way. Obliquely jokes tell us a lot about lifeworlds.

It is a commonplace that sense of humour varies from culture to culture and from person to person. The spoken joke has an ephemerality that can

be turned to telling rhetorical account. The joke does not always illustrate a point, although it *can* do so. In spoken language its function is more often to relieve tension, to provide contrast, sometimes deliberately switching gears in theme or mood. A feeling for jokes is built into the texture of successful communication and this includes even the solemn occasions when people are being interviewed. Humour embraces such subtleties as a sense of the droll or the wry, and has as one of its most delightful manifestations – dry humour. Clowning with words is always a dangerous thing because it is only acceptable if all concerned are willing to make a detour, to climb down from hobby horses – to leave linearity of discourse. The circus clown who turns a somersault may find himself in a different place from where he started. Or, alternatively, he may find himself exactly where he was. In either case, classic clowning protocol lays down that the clown gaze round in amazement, shrug his shoulders, and start all over again. Are not a great many of our tortuous philosophical excursions much like this? But the rub is that nothing is quite as it was after we have been through our ritual exercises. The vertigo induced by somersaulting, actual or metaphorical, ensures that.

One of the old-style clowning acts of the forties, especially associated with the Marx Brothers, went like this. The first character comes on stage, picks up an apparently heavy chain and tugs at it, trying in vain to break it. His muscles strain and his eyes almost pop out of his head. All to no avail. The chain will not break. The second man comes on stage. He takes one look, picks up the chain, and snaps it with the greatest of ease. It was made of silver paper. Such are many of the paper tigers and dragons at which philosophers tilt their swords. And paper tigers do not even growl. Artificial problems concerning golden mountains and round squares have happily disappeared with the Dodo. And about time. For we are haunted now by the nightmare world of possible extinction, a flat world from which we might literally fall off.

It would be worthwhile, I think, if, instead of analyzing profundities about tables and chairs, pots and mother-of-pearl[1], we turned to matters like the following. X is walking along the street and suddenly thinks he recognizes someone he knows. He taps Y on the shoulder. 'Didn't we last meet in Pinsk?' he asks hopefully. Y turns round with a rather blank look on his face. 'But I have never been to Pinsk', he replies. X then says, 'Well, come to think of it, neither have I'. Needless to say, it is a Yiddish joke, and echoes all the pathos of the lonely immigrant in the big city, striving to find someone who belongs to the old world he knew. The joke *reveals* the social reality of the lifeworld of the first generation immigrant. It reveals it better, in many ways, than a sociological analysis could. Moreover, it serves the purpose of making that reality *tolerable*, no doubt in a wry fashion. At the two poles of states of bliss or utter misery, we may indeed encounter what is utterly *nirvacaniya*[2]. Communication takes place in the territory in between the two. Our example illustrates another point as well. What room can there be, it may be objected, for jokes in a universe where any sensitive person could well be almost overcome by a sense of *lacrimae rerum*, the pity of it all. But it is precisely at the edge of the abyss that the tragic-comic is experienced in all its intensity. It is

not for nothing that the humour of the Jewish people is among the richest in the world. The joke is very often *aigre-doux*, and the *aigre-doux* has all the ambivalence of reality itself, the ambiguity of lifeworlds.

Jokes serve many purposes. Sometimes they are a cold water shower, and at their best they provide an aperture on reality, a capacity with which I have elsewhere endowed metaphors[1]. Wit, humour, satire, and irony are not all the same by any means. But to explore their place in philosophical prose would be a rewarding exercise. We would find ourselves in conversation with men as diverse as Socrates, Montaigne, Voltaire, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Gilbert Ryle. Those who have a taste for the pungency of philosophical fare along with more pedestrian disquisitions would be well advised to enjoy the conversation of such men. For there is nothing like wit, humour *et al*, more able to prick the bubble of pretension. Now pretension is a major bugbear of philosophers, and following from this arise aridity and boredom from which the good Lord save us.

Of course, there are occasions when something appears to be funny which was not intended to be. Scholars have provided various interpretations of a well known *sukta* of the *Rgveda*, the so-called frog-hymn 7,103. The author praises the frogs which he describes as raising their voices together when the rains come, like Brahmins and their pupils repeating portions of Vedic texts. Is the author poking fun at the Brahmins or is he not? The disagreements of commentators on this are themselves quite entertaining, with Winternitz, Haug, Bloomfield and Oldenberg all raising their voices, if not like frogs, then at least like crickets in the Black Forest. Aristophanes and his drama *The Frogs* is a poor guide here. The consensus is that the passage is not intended to be a joke, for everyone living in the Indian sub-continent knows very well that the croaking of frogs in the rainy season is a welcome sound and not a funny one. True, the peacock is a more dignified harbinger of rain, but the lowly frog is not to be despised. The *Atharva Veda* contains passages in which frogs are implored to announce rain (*Varsam a Vada*) or produce rain (*Varsam Vanudhvam*). In short, a note of warning has to be sounded – a rain-charm is not a joke. This underlines my earlier point that jokes are not culture free. But what a fine example the frog-hymn gives us of the relation between language and reality, a subtle relation, one that certainly goes far beyond description. It invokes a whole culture – the Brahmins' pupils repeating their lessons, the voices of the frogs likened to the lowing of cows, that is, something benign and auspicious, the rejoicing at the coming of rain – a culture in which men, animals and the cosmic elements are all united together in seasonal celebration, truly a lifeworld belonging to ancient times.

We started with Disneyland. From this fabulous place to Koenigsberg is a far cry indeed. A toothcomb is needed if we are to pick out any jokes in Kant's prose. Here are two of my favourites. First we have his image of absurdity, the spectacle of a man milking a he-goat and holding a sieve underneath. This surely takes its place along with 'the son of a barren woman', 'the hare's horn' and all the rest, except that the image it arouses in the imagination is not only that of something absurd but also hilarious. Next, here is a glimpse

of the Kant who used to enjoy the conversation of sailors in his hometown. It must have been from one of the German marines who had sailed to India in his time that he heard this one. The German visitor offered a bottle of ale to a Nawab. He pulled the cork with the customary plop and out frothed the brew. The Nawab stared in amazement. 'I expect you are wondering how the froth comes out', said the sailor. 'Not at all', replied the Nawab. 'I am wondering how it got in'. Truly, reality spills over. How much of it can we capture in language?

It is time to pull these threads together. We started with Disneyland and found the following: the thin line between reality and illusion, the way in which non-linguistic media often prove to be more powerful vehicles of communication than language, and how Disney's mythical heroes are as significant indicators of social reality as the characters of the *Pancatantra* and the *Hitopadesha* were. We are also led to recognize the importance of suggestion as against statement. If we wish to cite humorous discourse as a species of language game, we may. Certainly the play element (in Huizinga's sense of 'play') is strongly present in it. So is contextuality, social acceptability and familiarity of idiom. Through wandering in the thickets of past and present cultures, we can glean from the phenomenon of jokes some not negligible ammunition for combating Weber's equation of rationality with the *Wertfrei*. For the joke at its best embodies and epitomizes a sophisticated sense of situation, an ability to laugh at oneself. It has an inner logic of its own and expresses rationality of a high degree. Eminently intelligible, if it is well turned, it can exhibit a certain rococo appreciation of the grotesque and the fantastic, the tragic-comic and the bitter-sweet, and these are not to be conflated with *Angst*-laden absurdity, or the *tamasik*[4] which admits no light. We are reminded that man is a language-using creature *within* the real. The joke is distilled wisdom. So also is the fable and the folktale. All make their way like sturdy plants out of a rich sub-soil. To be able to make a joke is linguistic evidence of a self-situating within a world which is not wholly alien. The lense of the joke is like the laser beam which produces a many coloured dome of lights.

It is good sometimes to get away from statements and contradictions, puzzles and bewitchments, to say nothing of all the philosophical equivalents of games of skittles with which logic and epistemology abound. To leave out jokes from philosophical consideration is to make the big mistake of identifying philosophy with the verbal pounce, the mock cut and thrust of debate, the barbed phrase which is intended to sink hooks and tear flesh. To commute between cultures as we all do these days is, *inter alia*, to develop an ear for the diversity of jokes prevalent in civilized conversation. When words slide at a tangent, leading us to conclusions we know very well are wrong, this is the time when jokes can save us. We are reminded of the human situation and that our speech can spring authentically out of it. We do well to be reminded of how complexly structured is the relation between language and reality, how obliquely referential is a lot of what we say, how diverse and rich are the things we do with words. To be able to share a joke gives us satisfaction because it

signifies sharing a lifeworld. And that surely is a good thing. Moreover, failure to 'see the point' does not involve any ethical odium.

NOTES

1 These are talked about in classical Indian philosophy.

2 (Sans.) Unspeakable.

3 *The Language of Philosophy*, Martinus Nijhoff, and Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1981.

4 This refer to the *guna* inertia.

Epilogue

The issues that emerge from the foregoing themes are daunting. But there seems little doubt that the ethical complexity of the situations we find ourselves in, situations often inherited from the past, call for recognition and reflection. Individual lifeworlds, diverse as they are, can overlap, and can run parallel to community lifeworlds or diverge from them. Add to this the consideration that political boundaries do not necessarily 'match' community affiliations, and both of these can shift thanks to historical exigencies. Whether the horizon[1] of a 'universal' lifeworld can be possible or not becomes a question increasingly difficult to fathom. The collision of metaphors may be significant. Horizons suggest long range extensions in space which can beckon, attract, or dismay. To fathom this, on the other hand, is to point to a depth beneath which much lingers and to which we often seem to have no access. The horizons of hope stretch north of the future, to invoke Celan's pregnant phrase; and the depths of inheritance, including the wounds of civilization and histories of deprivation, are part and parcel of the pre-judices, as Gadamer puts it, which are intrinsic to our *Sitz im Leben*. The general structures referred to by Husserl and Schutz are perhaps not too difficult to identify. But it is the specificity of situation and the diverse cargoes that we carry that circumvent (and the etymology of this verb illuminates this) the *shareability* of experience. For example, the affluent, apart from notable exceptions, cannot imagine what it is like to be marginalized, excluded from the life of those who live in pleasant pastures.

Whether our analyses begin with a basically monadic conception of personhood or with the dyadic situation of 'I and Thou' makes a difference as to how we envisage the possibility and actuality of 'We'. The contrast between 'We' and 'They', 'Us' and 'Them' can suggest an aporia, indeed, so often, a chasm. In fact, the plural forms of speech perhaps indicate an even greater distance than that between 'I' and 'He'/ 'She'. Of course, the third person plural can be used purely referentially as in 'They said they would visit us on Wednesday'. In any case, subjectivity and intersubjectivity are intimately related. Intrinsic to the rupture of both dyadic and collective relations is the implication that the diverse lifeworlds are out of kilter with each other, and the reasons for this are innumerable. Less generally admitted is the fact that a sense of otherness which gives rise to conflict between collectives, including nations, can be fanned by politicians pursuing their own power games, something which attracts less attention than the peccadilloes ventilated by the media. The range of acts of commission and omission regarded as unethical in sundry times and places would be worth investigating. In any case, it may generally be agreed that unethical acts impinge unfavourably on the lifeworlds of ordinary folk, no matter to what extent the perpetrators might appear to flourish like the green bay tree.

To be dogged by circumstance is not something which, over a lifetime, even the most fortunate among us can escape. Responsibility seems to

be bounded by the specificity of the situation we are in, and the competencies we have. Are there occasions when, in all fairness, it is proper to say 'That is not our business'? Are there limits to our responsibility? Dostoievsky did not think so. Exemplars are so often found among the least privileged in society. Does the sacrifice of the poorest, who share the little that they have, the widow's mite, count more than the largesse of the rich? Also, we admire those who 'rise above circumstances', as if against the very arbitrariness of Dame Fortune mortals yet had some resource to draw upon.

These resources vary from culture to culture. For example, an overall framework such as the concept of *dharma* seems to provide still has to reckon with the diversity of *swadharmas*. Then again, the very changing content of *dharma* might be thought to balance any concept of it as eternal or *sanatana*. The notion of *sanatanadharma*, often invoked by Hindus in the diaspora, when pressed by non-Hindus to explain what they 'believed', can be employed to justify the status quo, and defend resistance to change. There are, of course, parallels to such a framework in other cultures. The idea of an inherent order, with which human beings need to be in tune, ranges from how the Stoics conceived this to the various ways in which the Chinese people have recognized a fundamentally stable principle in the universe with which all living things are connected. Admission of such a lawlike cosmic principle can provide the focus of human aspiration as well as its enabling power, seen in religious or quasi-religious terms by many people, but not always such. The gap between such an overarching principle and attempts to walk justly in everyday dealings with others can nurture a sense of inadequacy, but can also be the spur to continue striving towards the commonwealth of value. It is surely this striving which is *sanatana*, and herein lies our humanity which, at best, and on occasion, can rise Phoenix-like out of our inhumanity.

The language of commitment is not far from that of *dharma*, and does not sit easily within all cultures. The notion that the cobbler should stick to his last, as the Latin tag has it, inheres in the thinking behind the caste system which maintains, basically, that each individual should have a legitimate place in society, a marker that is *recognized*. This aspect of it is overshadowed once horizontal mobility is facilitated. Industrialization has brought about both uprooting and rerooting. In a 'modern' society, self-definition is a constant task. The traditional cobbler sitting under a tree, and the factory worker, can each experience a fundamental change in their lifeworlds, brought about in one case, let us say, by preferences for plastic (and therefore, not repairable) sandals overriding preferences for leather, and, in the latter, by a slump in the market for the particular product made in the factory. What is under threat, for each of these workers, is their function in society, a function which is identified with their livelihood. Modern life in cities often hinges on the transferability of skills or the acquiring of new ones. The word 'commitment' seems to have obtained new usages in our somewhat conditional contemporary ventures, shifting from salience in religious discourse to party manifestoes, mission statements in commercial undertakings, and, as a general reference, to conscientious performance of duties assigned.

But here is a person trying out a job with conditions on both sides. The employee is not too enthusiastic since the reputation of the firm has yet to be established and the service rules have some unattractive features. So the inappropriateness of speaking of commitment has grounds, and, in fact, prudence indicates the need for an open-ended attitude to the new job. The concept of 'temporary attachment' extends to other spheres as well. Since our lifeworlds link us in multiple ways with others, some of the links will be less compelling than others. I cannot join the choir because I cannot be committed to the rehearsal times which clash with other obligations that I already have. But even these may drop off my list of priorities if unforeseen circumstances arise. In short, whatever I go in for tends to be accompanied by the provisos 'other things being equal', 'in the long run', and 'as far as I can tell'. All of these have a quasi-scientific air about them, that is, an air of probabilism. A clear ethical imperative can erupt in modern lifeworlds in an almost disruptive way. Weaving through dense traffic, I have knocked a pedestrian over with my car. I must get him to the hospital/phone for an ambulance/administer first aid if required, and so forth. Here, at least, I am committed to doing something. But -- and may I be forgiven -- a qualified doctor appears on the scene and takes over, and I feel relieved. My commitment is at an end. I am no 'good Samaritan'.

The multiple allegiance gambit, illustrated in some Hindu lifeworlds, might remind one of the way in which a 'modern' lifeworld is constructed today, typified in the 'busyness' offered either as an excuse for not engaging in some desirable activity such as raising funds for a good cause, or, as a matter of self congratulation and deemed to merit admiration by others. Yet the reactions of others can veer between 'It's amazing how he does so many things', to 'None of them are done well and he doesn't seem to care for his family at all'. Of course many of our 'extra' activities reflect preferences only possible when 'essential' work as such allows for a certain amount of leisure time. And ethical issues can certainly arise with regard to the use of 'free time'. We think more highly of the man who is a volunteer for 'Samaritans' than of one who gambles in a casino. Allegiance is probably too strong a word to apply to what have become habits, rather than anything else. But there are good habits and bad habits. No doubt many are ethically neutral, although even these are eligible for ethical assessment if we bring in other, and definitely meritorious, things we *could* have been doing with our time. The notion of sins of omission lurks in the background here.

But let us take another sort of case. In a traditional society, X, who is known to be particularly observant about prescriptions and prohibitions in daily life, is looked upon as an exemplar by some, and as undesirably conservative by others. There is no supervenient standpoint, we are told these days, from which the two lifestyles can be judged. I may try to persuade X that a bath in a river deemed holy is inadvisable, given the pollution of the water which is a matter of common knowledge. If he succumbs to typhoid or cholera it will be bad both for him and his family. He may react by being even more firmly entrenched in his pattern of behaviour, for he is willing to stake

his life on this particular course of behaviour. He 'knows' that the river has miraculous powers, and besides, he is doing what his ancestors have done for generations. He is witnessing to his lifeworld, one which he shares with others like him who belonging to the same culture. This example also suggests that a lot of behaviour does not spring from choice at the time, but emerges out of sedimented layers of experience, our own and those of our ancestors. In short, much of the time we scarcely know why we do what we do. If this is so, the Buddhist injunction to be 'heedful' is indeed a hard saying. Is such an 'ought' compatible with 'can'?

My difference of standpoint from that of the bather in the Ganges can be based on many things. I can see the octopus-like tentacles of trains of consequences reaching out from another's actions, and may very well be less conscious of the implications of what I do myself. Opportunities for access to information, moreover, plays a part in influencing my attitudes and courses of action. In any case, multiplicity is built into the lifeworld of an individual in today's modern world, and lifeworlds carry the imprint of more than one culture. Even in traditional societies, inherited patterns of behaviour exist in tandem with later additions deriving from contact with others, the effect of the media, a modicum of education, the expectation of benefit and so on. Current political discourse refers to the task of coordinating the local, national and global spheres. However, there is a sense in which individual lifeworlds are foundational vis à vis these. Since each lifeworld contains a veritable network of strands, not forgetting their temporality, the individual can be described as a microcosm. Singularity and social sphere are not at opposite poles, for both common and diverse heritages shape the worlds in which we live. Since we live in more than one world (e.g. office, home, school etc.), and worlds overlap (we all suffer from the pollution in our city), and worlds constantly change (the new supermarket has adversely affected the takings of the small shop-keeper near our house, nor can we reach the new market easily) there is a considerable base here not only for an adjustment of lifeworlds, but for the development of something like a collective lifeworld stemming from which community life can gradually grow. That such a process of growth reveals an expansion of allegiance is stressed by thinkers as diverse as Hierocles, Adam Smith, Martin Buber and Mahatma Gandhi.

Yet, on the other hand, a sense of uncertainty about what others may do or not do hovers on the penumbra of our consciousness. The impact that the intricacies of modern life have made, includes changes in our conception of responsibility. Here too we find a wide scatter of reactions – a closing of ranks, self-preservation asserting itself both in the individual, the family and ethnic group; and yet on the other hand, a widening of horizons and a quickening of sympathies across frontiers. While the voice of prudence advises the perplexed 'not to get involved', the emerging of ethical awareness dictates otherwise. The imperative to respond to the appeal of those in need challenges the temptation to mind one's own business. The conflictual potential that lies within the fund of possibilities within communities, prompts reflection on the extent to which outbreaks of violence can be obviated, not by the instrumen-

tality of preemptive violence, but by strategies of a different kind. No doubt there are those too who think that the threat of common disasters may be a stronger motivation for positive cooperation than the cultivation of 'gentler virtues'. This may well be so.

At all events, the viability of nonviolence calls for reflection. Nonviolence in individual and family life is difficult enough in today's world, or so it would seem, if the occasions of violence reported in the press are anything to go by. The moral equivalent of war, an expression used by both William James and Gandhi, can scarcely be employed by societies and governments where violence is visibly endemic. The democratic way of life cannot be imposed by force on those who have suffered at the hands of some of those who have professed to follow it. At the same time, there is a history of nonviolent ways of bringing about a breakthrough in political and social situations which seemed to be gridlocked in hostility and violence. The breakthroughs cannot take place as long as injustice clogs the channels of human communication. Collective wrath so often stems from injustice and usually provokes further reactive injustice. The perpetuation of victimhood has in recent years been a conspicuous feature of the spread of oppression of both old and new kinds, the latter mascarading under the cloak of apparent benefit.

The commonality of positive strategies in individual, local, national and global contexts (in ascending order of generality) lies in the imperative to eschew force on the understanding that violence cannot be ended through further violence. The elimination of resort to violence in both individual and collective life, including in the latter the behaviour of national governments, requires a far reaching pedagogy at grassroots level, along with policies in public life which do not steamroller the lifeworlds of ordinary citizens and also those whose residence falls short of citizenship for some reason or other. It would be naïve to imagine that the ethical dimension in our lifeworlds is unrelated to political and economic factors. For example, there is surely a connection between reliance on the production and export of military hardware to keep the ship of state afloat economically, the unrestricted availability of guns to the general public, the fanning of discord in order to create a market for the weapons produced, and prevalence of an environment in which simulacra of violence shown in the media are regarded as entertainment.

As I see it, violence presents the most critical ethical challenge of our time. Violence in the form of war destroyed the lifeworlds of millions in the twentieth century and continues to do so in the twentyfirst. More bluntly, the slaughter which war brings -- and never before has the slaughter of civilians been as prevalent as it is today -- has come to be taken as 'collateral damage'. This is a clear case of whitewashing the blood-stained tablets of history.

Next, one may well ask if the concept of universalism of various kinds that has surfaced in the long history of ideas, has a modicum of validity now. The Kantian vision of the conditions in which perpetual peace would be possible, and Husserl's entertaining of the possibility of a universal lifeworld which would serve as a regulative idea rather than a constitutive one in Kant's sense of this distinction, provide two important pointers. Even within a single

lifetime, one has the impression that the impossible can happen, taking this to extend between the sublimest creations of art and the most heroic actions of human beings and at the other extreme the apparently limitless inhumanity of which that species is capable. Aron Gurwitsch's concept of a lifeworld of 'all human beings communicating with each other either directly or indirectly'[2] suggests a totality comprising infinite diversity; but how much communication and of what quality, would take place, is an open question. Here are two different kinds of cases. It is possible to envisage a small face to face community which *strove* to behave as if all members belonged to a kingdom of ends. But, the communication that takes place between thousands of displaced people living in a transit camp, amounts to a sharing of misery, a common lifeworld of misery.

Could there be a limitless solidarity of all moral beings in Max Scheler's phrase, and how would this show itself ? To share 'responsibility for' would include the sharing of guilt, common resistance to evil courses of action, and joint participation in positive measures of meliorist activity. All such strategies would need to cut across factors such as religion, ethnicity, kinship, and wounding historical legacies, to say nothing of pressing political and economic factors which were divisive at the time.

In contrast to such a 'totalizing' programme, there are two universalizing forces which are already in operation, in the form of science and economics. Science, and its offshoot, technology, provides a corpus of knowledge, however unequally accessible, and however increasingly bypassed by say, alternative medicine, alternative models of agriculture and the like, some of which have sprung specifically out of the unequal accessibility referred to. Currently, economic networks are gradually bringing about connections of dependence and interdependence which, inter alia, reflect and generate inequality. The ethicist, confronting these two instruments of power, for this is what they seem to be, cannot but be struck by the absence of ethical considerations arising in either of these other than peripherally or by those outside the ranks of those who actually operate these systems. Gradually, however, reactions of dismay, or at least disquiet, are felt in the first instance by those who already bear the brunt of what is happening, or those who are likely do so. Hence, for example, there is considerable disquiet about the ethics of cloning. And yet from a scientific point of view, restriction of the momentum of research would seem to be all of a piece with the policies of those who persecuted scientists centuries ago. Likewise, there is consternation in many quarters about the detrimental effect the process of globalization has on the economics of poorer countries. However, its protagonists see it as only a rational extension of the free market economy, forgetting that perfect competition, as a matter of fact, is never perfect. In other words the totalizing thrusts of scientific advance and the current economic nostrum generate both advocates and critics.

Another juxtaposition in our contemporary lifeworlds is that of xenophilia and xenophobia. The former is exhibited in the mélange of cross-cultural borrowings within pop culture – witnessed to, for example, in the writings of Pico Iyer[3]. It is fast becoming a world phenomenon, driven, no doubt, by

the twin dynamics of commerce and politics. Xenophobia is all too evident in demonization of the 'other'. In each, it seems to me, we see viruses at work which are characterized by suspensions of taste and ethical judgement. Against such a global scene the needs of strangers – and this includes the marginalized in our own societies – are reflected but momentarily on the television screen. Our dependence on others, and even more, our interdependence, let alone our responsibilities towards our neighbours, fail to grip attention. Those who are unhappy at the triviality of pop culture, and the mawkish sentiment of its ditties, include those who lament the loss of a 'high' culture, and others who fear the disappearance of the so-called 'little traditions'. Furthermore, given the embeddedness of virtues, doubts can be raised regarding what the ideals are which are embedded in the type of homogeneity that goes along with lowest common denominator culture. Resistance seems to be offered largely in the guise of various fundamentalisms, an outcome which, in turn, occasions concern.

Search for a universal perspective in our own day takes off from radically different histories and radical inequalities of life-chances. And yet these relativities are balanced by commonalities which cannot be denied, prominent among which are the facts of human vulnerability, acceleration of changes in the natural world which threaten the human species, and increasing disillusionment with the intentions and capacities of those who occupy the seats of power. If communication be the key to the reconciling of diverse lifeworlds, a new set of virtues may need to be developed, and may ever be in the making, for reason is not autonomous. It is neither *Kulturfrei* nor *Wertfrei*. Crucially, the voices of victims (and they will not be present at the negotiating table) can only be heard by those who have ears to hear. In the context of divergent interests, negotiation can only be fruitful if it is conducted in stages and total agreement is not insisted upon.

Mahatma Gandhi's wise counsels could yet be a guide for the perplexed: resistance to authority when it has been abused, constructive work, and putting one's own house in order. There can be no greater target than the fostering of peace, and there is no greater barrier to this than the prevalence of vast discrepancies of lifeworlds. Looking at Gandhi's three criteria : the first, in the form of *satyagraha*, provides an instrument for restructuring lifeworlds justly, an instrument of empowerment for the least privileged; the second enables a new society to be built at the micro level pari passu with the method of protest and resistance; and the third amounts to beginning the task of reformation with oneself and one's own community. In other words, the ethical leverage is not located in new hierarchies of power, new international administrative networks, but in ordinary people in whom Gandhi believed there were untapped nonviolent resources yet to be drawn upon. The relation of lifeworlds to ethics in this way obtains a certain clarity. It is none other than the link between being in charge of one's destiny and mutual aid, each being both the ground and telos of the other.

Last ditchers and diehards tend to carry a load of grievances and fears, and to dwell on the most negative memories of the past. But the call to

build on perhaps long-forgotten memories of breakthroughs can yet be heard, and not necessarily in the ranks of the privileged. This is what happened when an old villager came out of his hut as the first stones had started flying in the course of a communal conflict. He addressed his own people like this: 'Brothers, let us not forget their fathers gave us the plot of land for our place of worship'. His voice rose like the clear notes of a flute, soaring above a tangle of contrapuntal lines, which, frozen at any one point, seemed to be nothing but discord. The theme had not been lost.

NOTES

1 See my *Hinterlands and Horizons*, Lexington Books, Md., 2002.

2 *The Field of Consciousness*, Pittsburgh, 1964, p.387.

3 See Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul, Video Night in Kathmandu*, Bloomsbury, London, 2001.

Index

D

E

F

K

L

M

N

O

P

R

S

T

THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976

in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development.* A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Colombia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

PUBLICATIONS ON CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY CHANGE

Series I. Culture and Values
Series II. Africa
Series IIA. Islam
Series III. Asia
Series IV. W. Europe and North America
Series IVA. Central and Eastern Europe
Series V. Latin America
Series VI. Foundations of Moral Education
Series VII. Seminars on Culture and Values

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY CHANGE

Series I. Culture and Values

I.1 *Research on Culture and Values: Intersection of Universities, Churches and Nations.* George F. McLean, ed. ISBN 0819173533 (paper); 081917352-5 (cloth).

I.2 *The Knowledge of Values: A Methodological Introduction to the Study of Values;* A. Lopez Quintas, ed. ISBN 081917419x (paper); 0819174181 (cloth).

I.3 *Reading Philosophy for the XXIst Century.* George F. McLean, ed. ISBN 0819174157 (paper); 0819174149 (cloth).

I.4 *Relations Between Cultures.* John A. Kromkowski, ed. ISBN 1565180089 (paper); 1565180097 (cloth).

I.5 *Urbanization and Values.* John A. Kromkowski, ed. ISBN 1565180100 (paper); 1565180119 (cloth).

I.6 *The Place of the Person in Social Life.* Paul Peachey and John A. Kromkowski, eds. ISBN 1565180127 (paper); 156518013-5 (cloth).

I.7 *Abrahamic Faiths, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts.* Paul Peachey, George F. McLean and John A. Kromkowski, eds. ISBN 1565181042 (paper).

I.8 *Ancient Western Philosophy: The Hellenic Emergence.* George F. McLean and Patrick J. Aspell, eds. ISBN 156518100X (paper).

I.9 *Medieval Western Philosophy: The European Emergence.* Patrick J. Aspell, ed. ISBN 1565180941 (paper).

I.10 *The Ethical Implications of Unity and the Divine in Nicholas of Cusa.* David L. De Leonardis. ISBN 1565181123 (paper).

I.11 *Ethics at the Crossroads: 1.Normative Ethics and Objective Reason.* George F. McLean, ed. ISBN 1565180224 (paper).

I.12 *Ethics at the Crossroads: 2.Personalist Ethics and Human Subjectivity.* George F. McLean, ed. ISBN 1565180240 (paper).

I.13 *The Emancipative Theory of Jürgen Habermas and Metaphysics.* Robert Badillo. ISBN 1565180429 (paper); 1565180437 (cloth).

I.14 *The Deficient Cause of Moral Evil According to Thomas Aquinas.* Edward Cook. ISBN 1565180704 (paper).

I.15 *Human Love: Its Meaning and Scope, a Phenomenology of Gift and Encounter.* Alfonso Lopez Quintas. ISBN 1565180747 (paper).

I.16 *Civil Society and Social Reconstruction.* George F. McLean, ed. ISBN 1565180860 (paper).

I.17 *Ways to God, Personal and Social at the Turn of Millennia: The Iqbal Lecture, Lahore.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181239 (paper).

I.18 *The Role of the Sublime in Kant's Moral Metaphysics.* John R. Goodreau. ISBN 1565181247 (paper).

I.19 *Philosophical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization.* Oliva Blanchette, Tomonobu Imamichi and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565181298 (paper).

I.20 *Faith, Reason and Philosophy: Lectures at The al-Azhar, Qom, Tehran, Lahore and Beijing; Appendix: The Encyclical Letter: Fides et Ratio.* George F. McLean. ISBN 156518130 (paper).

I.21 *Religion and the Relation between Civilizations: Lectures on Cooperation between Islamic and Christian Cultures in a Global Horizon.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181522 (paper).

I.22 *Freedom, Cultural Traditions and Progress: Philosophy in Civil Society and Nation Building, Tashkent Lectures, 1999.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181514 (paper).

I.23 *Ecology of Knowledge.* Jerzy A. Wojciechowski. ISBN 1565181581 (paper).

I.24 *God and the Challenge of Evil: A Critical Examination of Some Serious Objections to the Good and Omnipotent God.* John L. Yardan. ISBN 1565181603 (paper).

I.25 *Reason, Rationality and Reasonableness, Vietnamese Philosophical Studies, I.* Tran Van Doan. ISBN 1565181662 (paper).

I.26 *The Culture of Citizenship: Inventing Postmodern Civic Culture.* Thomas Bridges. ISBN 1565181689 (paper).

I.27 *The Historicity of Understanding and the Problem of Relativism in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Osman Bilen. ISBN 1565181670 (paper).

I.28 *Speaking of God.* Carlo Huber. ISBN 1565181697 (paper).

I.29 *Persons, Peoples and Cultures in a Global Age: Metaphysical Bases for Peace between Civilizations.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181875 (paper).

I.30 *Hermeneutics, Tradition and Contemporary Change: Lectures In Chennai/ Madras, India.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181883 (paper).

I.31 *Husserl and Stein.* Richard Feist and William Sweet, eds. ISBN 1565181948 (paper).

I.32 *Paul Hanly Furfey's Quest for a Good Society.* Bronislaw Misztal, Francesco Villa, and Eric Sean Williams, eds. ISBN 1565182278 (paper).

I.33 *Three Theories of Society.* Paul Hanly Furfey. ISBN 978-1565182288 (paper).

I.34 *Building Peace In Civil Society: An Autobiographical Report from a Believers' Church.* Paul Peachey. ISBN 978-1565182325 (paper).

Series II. Africa

II.1 *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies: I.* Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyeke, eds. ISBN 1565180046 (paper); 1565180054 (cloth).

II.2 *The Foundations of Social Life: Ugandan Philosophical Studies: I.* A.T. Dalfovo, ed. ISBN 1565180062 (paper); 156518007-0 (cloth).

II.3 *Identity and Change in Nigeria: Nigerian Philosophical Studies, I.* Theophilus Okere, ed. ISBN 1565180682 (paper).

II.4 *Social Reconstruction in Africa: Ugandan Philosophical studies, II.* E. Wamala, A.R. Byaruhanga, A.T. Dalfovo, J.K.Kigongo, S.A.Mwanahewa and G.Tusabe, eds. ISBN 1565181182 (paper).

II.5 *Ghana: Changing Values/Chaning Technologies: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, II.* Helen Lauer, ed. ISBN 1565181441 (paper).

II.6 *Sameness and Difference: Problems and Potentials in South African Civil Society: South African Philosophical Studies, I.* James R.Cochrane and Bastienne Klein, eds. ISBN 1565181557 (paper).

II.7 *Protest and Engagement: Philosophy after Apartheid at an Historically Black South African University: South African Philosophical Studies, II.* Patrick Giddy, ed. ISBN 1565181638 (paper).

II.8 *Ethics, Human Rights and Development in Africa: Ugandan Philosophical Studies, III.* A.T. Dalfovo, J.K. Kigongo, J. Kisekka, G. Tusabe, E. Wamala, R. Munyonyo, A.B. Rukooko, A.B.T. Byaruhanga-akiiki, M. Mawa, eds. ISBN 1565181727 (paper).

II.9 *Beyond Cultures: Perceiving a Common Humanity: Ghanian Philosophical Studies, III.* Kwame Gyekye ISBN 156518193X (paper).

II.10 *Social and Religious Concerns of East African: A Wajibu Anthology: Kenyan Philosophical Studies, I.* Gerald J. Wanjohi and G. Wakuraya Wanjohi, eds. ISBN 1565182219 (paper).

II.11 *The Idea of an African University: The Nigerian Experience: Nigerian Philosophical Studies, II.* Joseph Kenny, ed. ISBN 978-1565182301 (paper).

II.12 *The Struggles after the Struggles: Zimbabwean Philosophical Study, I.* David Kaulemu, ed. ISBN 9781565182318 (paper).

Series IIA. Islam

IIA.1 *Islam and the Political Order.* Muhammad Saïd al-Ashmawy. ISBN ISBN 156518047X (paper); 156518046-1 (cloth).

IIA.2 *Al-Ghazali Deliverance from Error and Mystical Union with the Almighty: Al-munqidh Min Al-dalil.* Critical edition of English translation with introduction by Muhammad Abulaylah and Nurshif Abdul-Rahim Rifat; Introduction and notes by George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181530 (Arabic-English edition, paper), ISBN 1565180828 (Arabic edition, paper), ISBN 156518081X (English edition, paper)

IIA.3 *Philosophy in Pakistan.* Naeem Ahmad, ed. ISBN 1565181085 (paper).

IIA.4 *The Authenticity of the Text in Hermeneutics.* Seyed Musa Dibadj. ISBN 1565181174 (paper).

IIA.5 *Interpretation and the Problem of the Intention of the Author: H.-G.Gadamer vs E.D.Hirsch.* Burhanettin Tatar. ISBN 156518121 (paper).

IIA.6 *Ways to God, Personal and Social at the Turn of Millennia: The Iqbal Lecture, Lahore.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181239 (paper).

IIA.7 *Faith, Reason and Philosophy: Lectures at The al-Azhar, Qom, Tehran, Lahore and Beijing; Appendix: The Encyclical Letter: Fides et Ratio.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181301 (paper).

IIA.8 *Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue: Bulgarian Philosophical Studies, III.* Plament Makariev, ed. ISBN 156518162X (paper).

IIA.9 *Values of Islamic Culture and the Experience of History, Russian Philosophical Studies, I.* Nur Kirabaev, Yuriy Pochta, eds. ISBN 1565181336 (paper).

IIA.10 *Christian-Islamic Preambles of Faith.* Joseph Kenny. ISBN 1565181387 (paper).

IIA.11 *The Historicity of Understanding and the Problem of Relativism in Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Osman Bilen. ISBN 1565181670 (paper).

IIA.12 *Religion and the Relation between Civilizations: Lectures on Cooperation between Islamic and Christian Cultures in a Global Horizon.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181522 (paper).

IIA.13 *Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council.* Mahmut Aydin. ISBN 1565181719 (paper).

IIA.14 *Philosophy of the Muslim World; Authors and Principal Themes.* Joseph Kenny. ISBN 1565181794 (paper).

IIA.15 *Islam and Its Quest for Peace: Jihad, Justice and Education.* Mustafa Köylü. ISBN 1565181808 (paper).

IIA.16 *Islamic Thought on the Existence of God: Contributions and Contrasts with Contemporary Western Philosophy of Religion.* Cafer S. Yaran. ISBN 1565181921 (paper).

IIA.17 *Hermeneutics, Faith, and Relations between Cultures: Lectures in Qom, Iran.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181913 (paper).

IIA.18 *Change and Essence: Dialectical Relations between Change and Continuity in the Turkish Intellectual Tradition.* Sinasi Gunduz and Cafer S. Yaran, eds. ISBN 1565182227 (paper).

Series III.Asia

III.1 *Man and Nature: Chinese Philosophical Studies, I.* Tang Yi-jie, Li Zhen, eds. ISBN 0819174130 (paper); 0819174122 (cloth).

III.2 *Chinese Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: Chinese Philosophical Studies, II.* Tran van Doan, ed. ISBN 1565180321 (paper); 156518033X (cloth).

III.3 *Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture: Chinese Philosophical Studies, III.* Tang Yijie. ISBN 1565180348 (paper); 156518035-6 (cloth). III.4 *Morality, Metaphysics and Chinese Culture (Metaphysics, Culture and Morality, I).* Vincent Shen and Tran van Doan, eds. ISBN 1565180275 (paper); 156518026-7 (cloth).

III.5 *Tradition, Harmony and Transcendence.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565180313 (paper); 156518030-5 (cloth).

III.6 *Psychology, Phenomenology and Chinese Philosophy: Chinese Philosophical Studies, VI.* Vincent Shen, Richard Knowles and Tran Van Doan, eds. ISBN 1565180453 (paper); 1565180445 (cloth).

III.7 *Values in Philippine Culture and Education: Philippine Philosophical Studies, I.* Manuel B. Dy, Jr., ed. ISBN 1565180412 (paper); 156518040-2 (cloth).

III.7A *The Human Person and Society: Chinese Philosophical Studies, VIIA.* Zhu Dasheng, Jin Xiping and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565180887.

III.8 *The Filipino Mind: Philippine Philosophical Studies II.* Leonardo N. Mercado. ISBN 156518064X (paper); 156518063-1 (cloth).

III.9 *Philosophy of Science and Education: Chinese Philosophical Studies IX.* Vincent Shen and Tran Van Doan, eds. ISBN 1565180763 (paper); 156518075-5 (cloth).

III.10 *Chinese Cultural Traditions and Modernization: Chinese Philosophical Studies, X.* Wang Miaoyang, Yu Xuanmeng and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565180682 (paper).

III.11 *The Humanization of Technology and Chinese Culture: Chinese Philosophical Studies XI.* Tomonobu Imamichi, Wang Miaoyang and Liu Fangtong, eds. ISBN 1565181166 (paper).

III.12 *Beyond Modernization: Chinese Roots of Global Awareness: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XII.* Wang Miaoyang, Yu Xuanmeng and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565180909 (paper).

III.13 *Philosophy and Modernization in China: Chinese Philosophical Studies XIII.* Liu Fangtong, Huang Songjie and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565180666 (paper).

III.14 *Economic Ethics and Chinese Culture: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XIV.* Yu Xuanmeng, Lu Xiaohe, Liu Fangtong, Zhang Rulun and Georges Enderle, eds. ISBN 1565180925 (paper).

III.15 *Civil Society in a Chinese Context: Chinese Philosophical Studies XV.* Wang Miaoyang, Yu Xuanmeng and Manuel B. Dy, eds. ISBN 1565180844 (paper).

III.16 *The Bases of Values in a Time of Change: Chinese and Western: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XVI.* Kirti Bunchua, Liu Fangtong, Yu Xuanmeng, Yu Wujin, eds. ISBN 156518114X (paper).

III.17 *Dialogue between Christian Philosophy and Chinese Culture: Philosophical Perspectives for the Third Millennium: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XVII.* Paschal Ting, Marian Kao and Bernard Li, eds. ISBN 1565181735 (paper).

III.18 *The Poverty of Ideological Education: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XVIII.* Tran Van Doan. ISBN 1565181646 (paper).

III.19 *God and the Discovery of Man: Classical and Contemporary Approaches: Lectures in Wuhan, China.* George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181891 (paper).

III.20 *Cultural Impact on International Relations: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XX.* Yu Xintian, ed. ISBN 156518176X (paper).

III.21 *Cultural Factors in International Relations: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XXI.* Yu Xintian, ed. ISBN 1565182049 (paper).

III.22 *Wisdom in China and the West: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XXII.* Vincent Shen and Willard Oxtoby †. ISBN 1565182057 (paper)

III.23 *China's Contemporary Philosophical Journey: Western Philosophy and Marxism ChineseP hilosophical Studies: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XXIII.* Liu Fangtong. ISBN 1565182065 (paper).

III.24 *Shanghai : Its Urbanization and Culture: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XXIV.* Yu Xuanmeng and He Xirong, eds. ISBN 1565182073 (paper).

IIIB.1 *Authentic Human Destiny: The Paths of Shankara and Heidegger: Indian Philosophical Studies, I*. Vensus A. George. ISBN 1565181190 (paper).

IIIB.2 *The Experience of Being as Goal of Human Existence: The Heideggerian Approach: Indian Philosophical Studies, II*. Vensus A. George. ISBN 156518145X (paper).

IIIB.3 *Religious Dialogue as Hermeneutics: Bede Griffiths's Advaitic Approach: Indian Philosophical Studies, III*. Kuruvilla Pandikattu. ISBN 1565181395 (paper).

IIIB.4 *Self-Realization [Brahmaanubhava]: The Advaitic Perspective of Shankara: Indian Philosophical Studies, IV*. Vensus A. George. ISBN 1565181549 (paper).

IIIB.5 *Gandhi: The Meaning of Mahatma for the Millennium: Indian Philosophical Studies, V*. Kuruvilla Pandikattu, ed. ISBN 1565181565 (paper).

IIIB.6 *Civil Society in Indian Cultures: Indian Philosophical Studies, VI*. Asha Mukherjee, Sabujkali Sen (Mitra) and K. Bagchi, eds. ISBN 1565181573 (paper).

IIIB.7 *Hermeneutics, Tradition and Contemporary Change: Lectures In Chennai/Madras, India*. George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181883 (paper).

IIIB.8 *Plenitude and Participation: The Life of God in Man: Lectures in Chennai/Madras, India*. George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181999 (paper).

IIIB.9 *Sufism and Bhakti, a Comparative Study*. Md. Sirajul Islam. ISBN 1565181980 (paper).

IIIB.10 *Reasons for Hope: Its Nature, Role and Future*. Kuruvilla Pandikattu, ed. ISBN 156518 2162 (paper).

IIB.11 *Lifeworlds and Ethics: Studies in Several Keys*. Margaret Chatterjee. ISBN 9781565182332 (paper).

IIIC.1 *Spiritual Values and Social Progress: Uzbekistan Philosophical Studies, I*. Said Shermukhamedov and Victoriya Levinskaya, eds. ISBN 1565181433 (paper).

IIIC.2 *Kazakhstan: Cultural Inheritance and Social Transformation: Kazakh Philosophical Studies, I*. Abdumalik Nysanbayev. ISBN 1565182022 (paper).

IIIC.3 *Social Memory and Contemporaneity: Kyrgyz Philosophical Studies, I*. Gulnara A. Bakieva. ISBN 9781565182349 (paper).

IIID.1 *Reason, Rationality and Reasonableness: Vietnamese Philosophical Studies, I*. Tran Van Doan. ISBN 1565181662 (paper).

IIID.2 *Hermeneutics for a Global Age: Lectures in Shanghai and Hanoi*. George F. McLean. ISBN 1565181905 (paper).

IIID.3 *Cultural Traditions and Contemporary Challenges in Southeast Asia*. Warayuth Sriwarakuel, Manuel B.Dy, J.Haryatmoko, Nguyen Trong Chuan, and Chhay Yiheang, eds. ISBN 1565182138 (paper).

IIID.4 *Filipino Cultural Traits: Claro R.Ceniza Lectures*. Rolando M. Gripaldo, ed. ISBN 1565182251 (paper).

IIID.5 *The History of Buddhism in Vietnam*. Chief editor: Nguyen Tai Thu; Authors: Dinh Minh Chi, Ly Kim Hoa, Ha thuc Minh, Ha Van Tan, Nguyen Tai Thu. ISBN 1565180984 (paper).

Series IV.Western Europe and North America

IV.1 *Italy in Transition: The Long Road from the First to the Second Republic: The Edmund D. Pellegrino Lectures.* Paolo Janni, ed. ISBN 1565181204 (paper).

IV.2 *Italy and The European Monetary Union: The Edmund D. Pellegrino Lectures.* Paolo Janni, ed. ISBN 156518128X (paper).

IV.3 *Italy at the Millennium: Economy, Politics, Literature and Journalism: The Edmund D. Pellegrino Lectures.* Paolo Janni, ed. ISBN 1565181581 (paper).

IV.4 *Speaking of God.* Carlo Huber. ISBN 1565181697 (paper).

IV.5 *The Essence of Italian Culture and the Challenge of a Global Age.* Paulo Janni and George F. McLean, eds. ISBB 1565181778 (paper).

IV.6 *Italic Identity in Pluralistic Contexts: Toward the Development of Intercultural Competencies.* Piero Bassetti and Paolo Janni, eds. ISBN 1565181441 (paper).

Series IVA. Central and Eastern Europe

IVA.1 *The Philosophy of Person: Solidarity and Cultural Creativity: Polish Philosophical Studies, I.* A. Tischner, J.M. Zycinski, eds. ISBN 1565180496 (paper); 156518048-8 (cloth).

IVA.2 *Public and Private Social Inventions in Modern Societies: Polish Philosophical Studies, II.* L. Dyczewski, P. Peachey, J.A. Kromkowski, eds. ISBN.paper 1565180518 (paper); 156518050X (cloth).

IVA.3 *Traditions and Present Problems of Czech Political Culture: Czechoslovak Philosophical Studies, I.* M. Bednár and M. Vejraka, eds. ISBN 1565180577 (paper); 156518056-9 (cloth).

IVA.4 *Czech Philosophy in the XXth Century: Czech Philosophical Studies, II.* Lubomír Nový and Jiří Gabriel, eds. ISBN 1565180291 (paper); 156518028-3 (cloth).

IVA.5 *Language, Values and the Slovak Nation: Slovak Philosophical Studies, I.* Tibor Pichler and Jana Gašparíková, eds. ISBN 1565180372 (paper); 156518036-4 (cloth).

IVA.6 *Morality and Public Life in a Time of Change: Bulgarian Philosophical Studies, I.* V. Prodanov and M. Stoyanova, eds. ISBN 1565180550 (paper); 1565180542 (cloth).

IVA.7 *Knowledge and Morality: Georgian Philosophical Studies, 1.* N.V. Chavchavadze, G. Nodia and P. Peachey, eds. ISBN 1565180534 (paper); 1565180526 (cloth).

IVA.8 *Cultural Heritage and Social Change: Lithuanian Philosophical Studies, I.* Bronius Kuzmickas and Aleksandr Dobrynin, eds. ISBN 1565180399 (paper); 1565180380 (cloth).

IVA.9 *National, Cultural and Ethnic Identities: Harmony beyond Conflict: Czech Philosophical Studies, IV.* Jaroslav Hroch, David Hollan, George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565181131 (paper).

IVA.10 *Models of Identities in Postcommunist Societies: Yugoslav Philosophical Studies, I.* Zagorka Golubovic and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565181211 (paper).

IVA.11 *Interests and Values: The Spirit of Venture in a Time of Change: Slovak Philosophical Studies, II.* Tibor Pichler and Jana Gasparikova, eds. ISBN 1565181255 (paper).

IVA.12 *Creating Democratic Societies: Values and Norms: Bulgarian Philosophical Studies, II.* Plamen Makariev, Andrew M.Blasko and Asen Davidov, eds. ISBN 156518131X (paper).

IVA.13 *Values of Islamic Culture and the Experience of History: Russian Philosophical Studies, I.* Nur Kirabaev and Yuriy Pochta, eds. ISBN 1565181336 (paper).

IVA.14 *Values and Education in Romania Today: Romanian Philosophical Studies,* Marin Calin and Magdalena Dumitrana, eds. ISBN 1565181344 (paper).

IVA.15 *Between Words and Reality, Studies on the Politics of Recognition and the Changes of Regime in Contemporary Romania.* Victor Neumann. ISBN 1565181611 (paper).

IVA.16 *Culture and Freedom: Romanian Philosophical Studies, III.* Marin Aiftinca, ed. ISBN 1565181360 (paper).

IVA.17 *Lithuanian Philosophy: Persons and Ideas Lithuanian Philosophical Studies, II.* Jurate Baranova, ed. ISBN 1565181379 (paper).

IVA.18 *Human Dignity: Values and Justice: Czech Philosophical Studies, III.* Miloslav Bednar, ed. ISBN 1565181409 (paper).

IVA.19 *Values in the Polish Cultural Tradition: Polish Philosophical Studies, III.* Leon Dyczewski, ed. ISBN 1565181425 (paper).

IVA.20 *Liberalization and Transformation of Morality in Post-communist Countries: Polish Philosophical Studies, IV.* Tadeusz Buksinski. ISBN 1565181786 (paper).

IVA.21 *Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue: Bulgarian Philosophical Studies, III.* Plament Makariev, ed. ISBN 156518162X (paper).

IVA.22 *Moral, Legal and Political Values in Romanian Culture: Romanian Philosophical Studies, IV.* Mihaela Czobor-Lupp and J. Stefan Lupp, eds. ISBN 1565181700 (paper).

IVA.23 *Social Philosophy: Paradigm of Contemporary Thinking: Lithuanian Philosophical Studies, III.* Jurate Morkuniene. ISBN 1565182030 (paper).

IVA.24 *Romania: Cultural Identity and Education for Civil Society.* Magdalena Dumitrana, ed. ISBN 156518209X (paper).

IVA.25 *Polish Axiology: the 20th Century and Beyond: Polish Philosophical Studies, V.* Stanislaw Jedynak, ed. ISBN 1565181417 (paper).

IVA.26 *Contemporary Philosophical Discourse in Lithuania: Lithuanian Philosophical Studies, IV.* Jurate Baranova, ed. ISBN 156518-2154 (paper).

IVA.27 *Eastern Europe and the Challenges of Globalization: Polish Philosophical Studies, VI.* Tadeusz Buksinski and Dariusz Dobrzanski, ed. ISBN 1565182189 (paper).

IVA.28 *Church, State, and Society in Eastern Europe: Hungarian Philosophical Studies, I.* Miklós Tomka. ISBN 156518226X.

IVA.29 *Politics, Ethics, and the Challenges to Democracy in 'New Independent States'.* Tinatin Bochorishvili, William Sweet, Daniel Ahern, eds. ISBN 9781565182240.

IVA.30 *Comparative Ethics in a Global Age.* Marietta T. Stepanyants, eds. ISBN 978-1565182356.

IVA.31 *Identity and Values of Lithuanians: Lithuanian Philosophical Studies, V.* Aida Savicka, eds. ISBN 9781565182367.

IVA.32 *The Challenge of Our Hope: Christian Faith in Dialogue: Polish Philosophical Studies, VII.* Waclaw Hryniewicz. ISBN 9781565182370.

IVA.33 *Diversity and Dialogue: Culture and Values in the Age of Globalization: Essays in Honour of Professor George F. McLean.* Andrew Blasko and Plamen Makariev, eds. ISBN 9781565182387.

Series V. Latin America

V.1 *The Social Context and Values: Perspectives of the Americas.* O. Pegoraro, ed. ISBN 081917355X (paper); 0819173541 (cloth).

V.2 *Culture, Human Rights and Peace in Central America.* Raul Molina and Timothy Ready, eds. ISBN 0819173576 (paper); 0-8191-7356-8 (cloth).

V.3 *El Cristianismo Aymara: Inculturacion o Culturizacion?* Luis Jolicoeur. ISBN 1565181042.

V.4 *Love as theFoundation of Moral Education and Character Development.* Luis Ugalde, Nicolas Barros and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565180801.

V.5 *Human Rights, Solidarity and Subsidiarity: Essays towards a Social Ontology.* Carlos E.A. Maldonado ISBN 1565181107.

Series VI. Foundations of Moral Education

VI.1 *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: Act and Agent.* G. McLean and F. Ellrod, eds. ISBN 156518001-1 (cloth) (paper); ISBN 1565180003.

VI.2 *Psychological Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: An Integrated Theory of Moral Development.* R. Knowles, ed. ISBN 156518002X (paper); 156518003-8 (cloth).

VI.3 *Character Development in Schools and Beyond.* Kevin Ryan and Thomas Lickona, eds. ISBN 1565180593 (paper); 156518058-5 (cloth).

VI.4 *The Social Context and Values: Perspectives of the Americas.* O. Pegoraro, ed. ISBN 081917355X (paper); 0819173541 (cloth).

VI.5 *Chinese Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development.* Tran van Doan, ed. ISBN 1565180321 (paper); 156518033 (cloth).

VI.6 *Love as theFoundation of Moral Education and Character Development.* Luis Ugalde, Nicolas Barros and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565180801.

Series VII. Seminars on Culture and Values

VII.1 *The Social Context and Values: Perspectives of the Americas.* O. Pegoraro, ed. ISBN 081917355X (paper); 0819173541 (cloth).

VII.2 *Culture, Human Rights and Peace in Central America.* Raul Molina and Timothy Ready, eds. ISBN 0819173576 (paper); 0819173568 (cloth).

VII.3 *Relations Between Cultures.* John A. Kromkowski, ed. ISBN 1565180089 (paper); 1565180097 (cloth).

VII.4 *Moral Imagination and Character Development: Volume I, The Imagination.* George F. McLean and John A. Kromkowski, eds. ISBN 1565181743 (paper).

VII.5 *Moral Imagination and Character Development: Volume II, Moral Imagination in Personal Formation and Character Development.* George F. McLean and Richard Knowles, eds. ISBN 1565181816 (paper).

VII.6 *Moral Imagination and Character Development: Volume III, Imagination in Religion and Social Life.* George F. McLean and John K. White, eds. ISBN 1565181824 (paper).

VII.7 *Hermeneutics and Inculturation.* George F. McLean, Antonio Gallo, Robert Magliola, eds. ISBN 1565181840 (paper).

VII.8 *Culture, Evangelization, and Dialogue.* Antonio Gallo and Robert Magliola, eds. ISBN 1565181832 (paper).

VII.9 *The Place of the Person in Social Life.* Paul Peachey and John A. Kromkowski, eds. ISBN 1565180127 (paper); 156518013-5 (cloth).

VII.10 *Urbanization and Values.* John A. Kromkowski, ed. ISBN 1565180100 (paper); 1565180119 (cloth).

VII.11 *Freedom and Choice in a Democracy, Volume I: Meanings of Freedom.* Robert Magliola and John Farrelly, eds. ISBN 1565181867 (paper).

VII.12 *Freedom and Choice in a Democracy, Volume II: The Difficult Passage to Freedom.* Robert Magliola and Richard Khuri, eds. ISBN 1565181859 (paper).

VII 13 *Cultural Identity, Pluralism and Globalization* (2 volumes). John P. Hogan, ed. ISBN 1565182170 (paper).

VII.14 *Democracy: In the Throes of Liberalism and Totalitarianism.* George F. McLean, Robert Magliola, William Fox, eds. ISBN 1565181956 (paper).

VII.15 *Democracy and Values in Global Times: With Nigeria as a Case Study.* George F. McLean, Robert Magliola, Joseph Abah, eds. ISBN 1565181956 (paper).

VII.16 *Civil Society and Social Reconstruction.* George F. McLean, ed. ISBN 1565180860 (paper).

VII.17 *Civil Society: Who Belongs?* William A.Barbieri, Robert Magliola, Rosemary Winslow, eds. ISBN 1565181972 (paper).

VII.18 *The Humanization of Social Life: Theory and Challenges.* Christopher Wheatley, Robert P. Badillo, Rose B. Calabretta, Robert Magliola, eds. ISBN 1565182006 (paper).

VII.19 *The Humanization of Social Life: Cultural Resources and Historical Responses.* Ronald S. Calinger, Robert P. Badillo, Rose B. Calabretta, Robert Magliola, eds. ISBN 1565182006 (paper).

VII.20 *Religious Inspiration for Public Life: Religion in Public Life, Volume I*. George F. McLean, John A. Kromkowski and Robert Magliola, eds. ISBN 1565182103 (paper).

VII.21 *Religion and Political Structures from Fundamentalism to Public Service: Religion in Public Life, Volume II*. John T. Ford, Robert A. Destro and Charles R. Dechert, eds. ISBN 1565182111 (paper).

VII.22 *Civil Society as Democratic Practice*. Antonio F. Perez, Semou Pathé Gueye, Yang Fenggang, eds. ISBN 1565182146 (paper).

VII.23 *Ecumenism and Nostra Aetate in the 21st Century*. George F. McLean and John P. Hogan, eds. ISBN 1565182197 (paper).

VII.24 *Multiple Paths to God: Nostra Aetate: 40 years Later*. John P. Hogan, George F. McLean & John A. Kromkowski, eds. ISBN 1565182200 (paper).

VII.25 *Globalization and Identity*. Andrew Blasko, Taras Dobko, Pham Van Duc and George Pattery, eds. ISBN 1565182200 (paper).

The International Society for Metaphysics

ISM.1. *Person and Nature*. George F. McLean and Hugo Meynell, eds. ISBN 0819170267 (paper); 0819170259 (cloth).

ISM.2. *Person and Society*. George F. McLean and Hugo Meynell, eds. ISBN 0819169250 (paper); 0819169242 (cloth).

ISM.3. *Person and God*. George F. McLean and Hugo Meynell, eds. ISBN 0819169382 (paper); 0819169374 (cloth).

ISM.4. *The Nature of Metaphysical Knowledge*. George F. McLean and Hugo Meynell, eds. ISBN 0819169277 (paper); 0819169269 (cloth).

ISM.5. *Philosophhical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization*. Oliva Blanchette, Tomonobu Imamichi and George F. McLean, eds. ISBN 1565181298 (paper).

The series is published and distributed by: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Cardinal Station, P.O.Box 261, Washington, D.C.20064, Tel./Fax.202/319-6089; e-mail: cua-rvp@cua.edu (paper); website: http://www.crvp.org. All titles are available in paper except as noted. Prices: $17.50 (paper).